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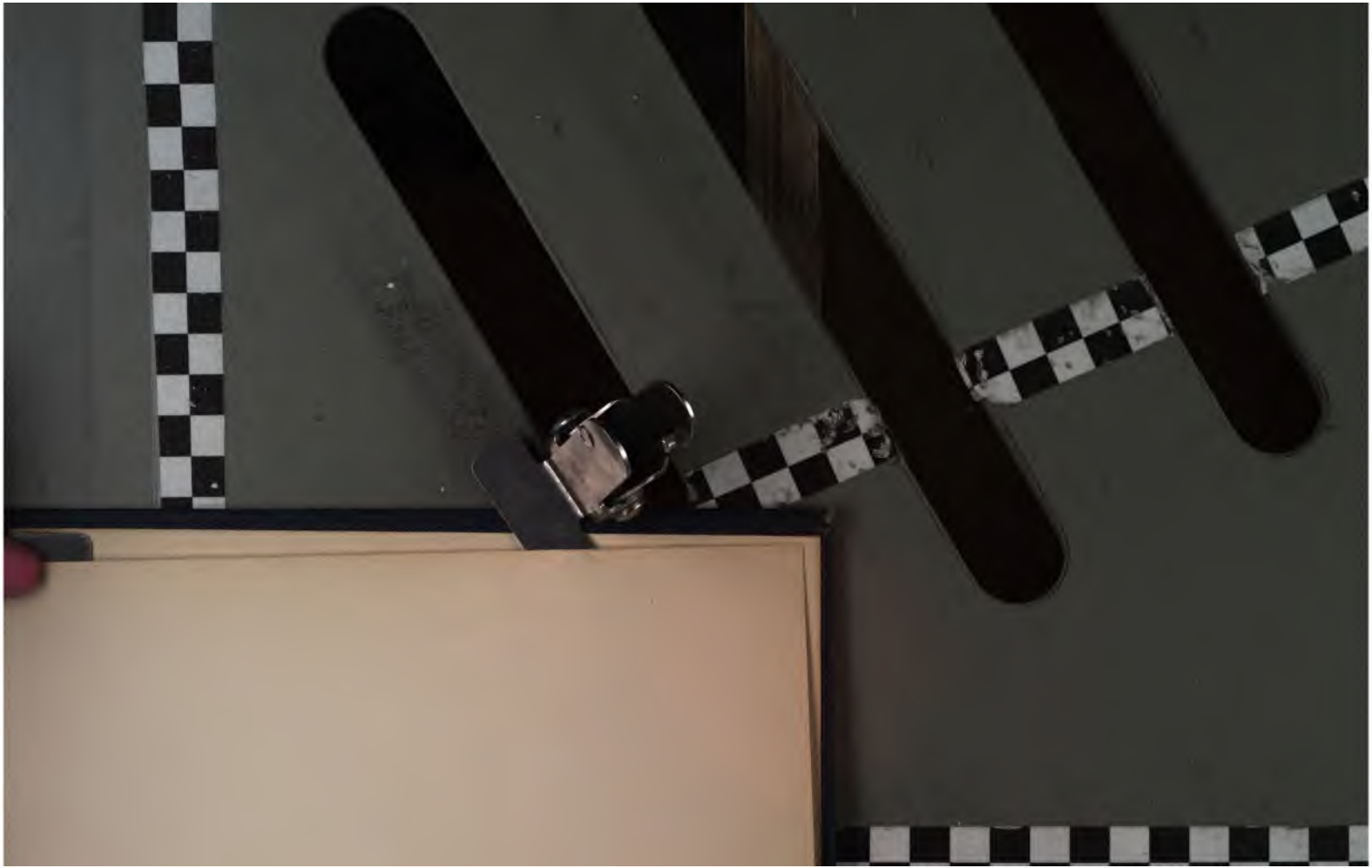

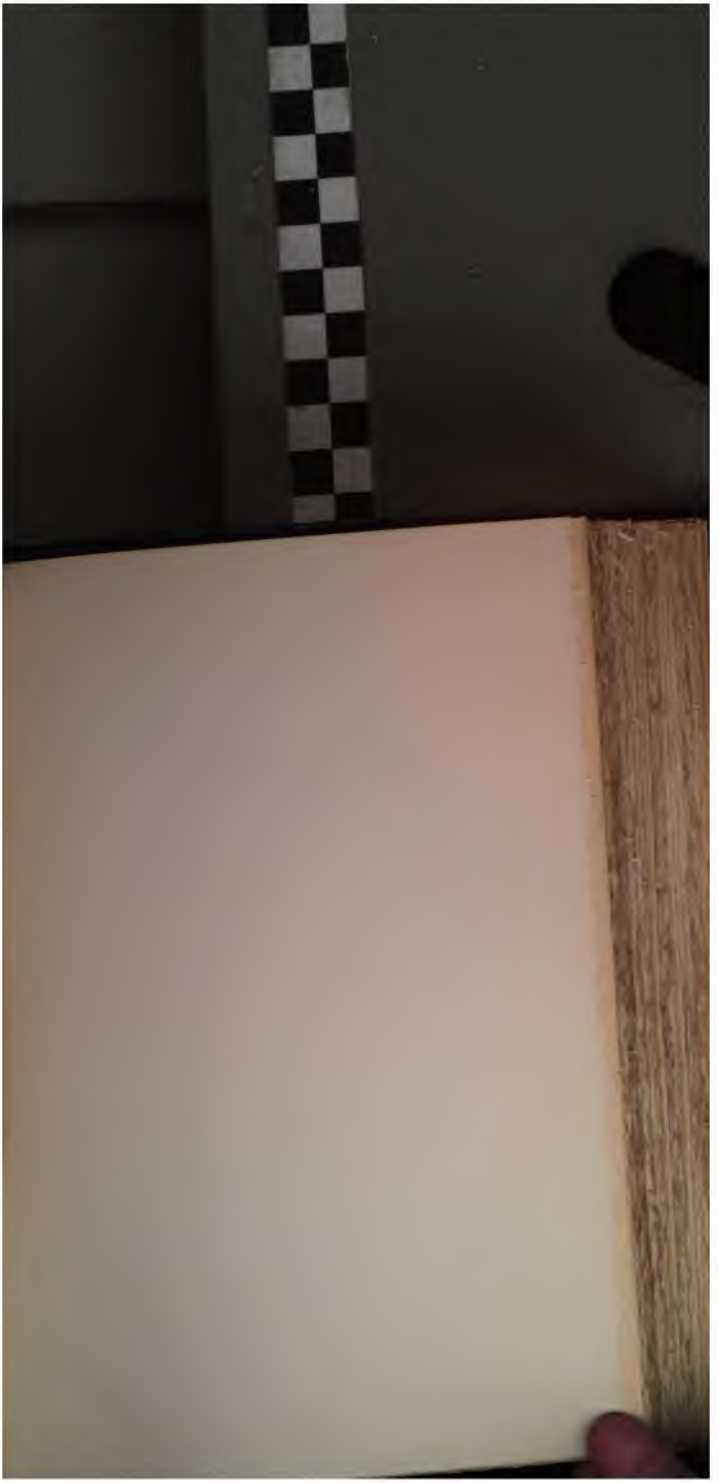

THE RACE AT THE HOGAR

The scientist's hat, being dragged from his head by the advocate's efforts to disengage his lash, had fallen on the snow like a black bird; the wig had followed its tail, which had declined to be parted from the lash.

NOVELS

BY

GEORGE SAND

VOLUME XII

THE SNOW MAN

VOL. II

PRINTED BY ARRANGEMENT WITH

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THE SNOW MAN

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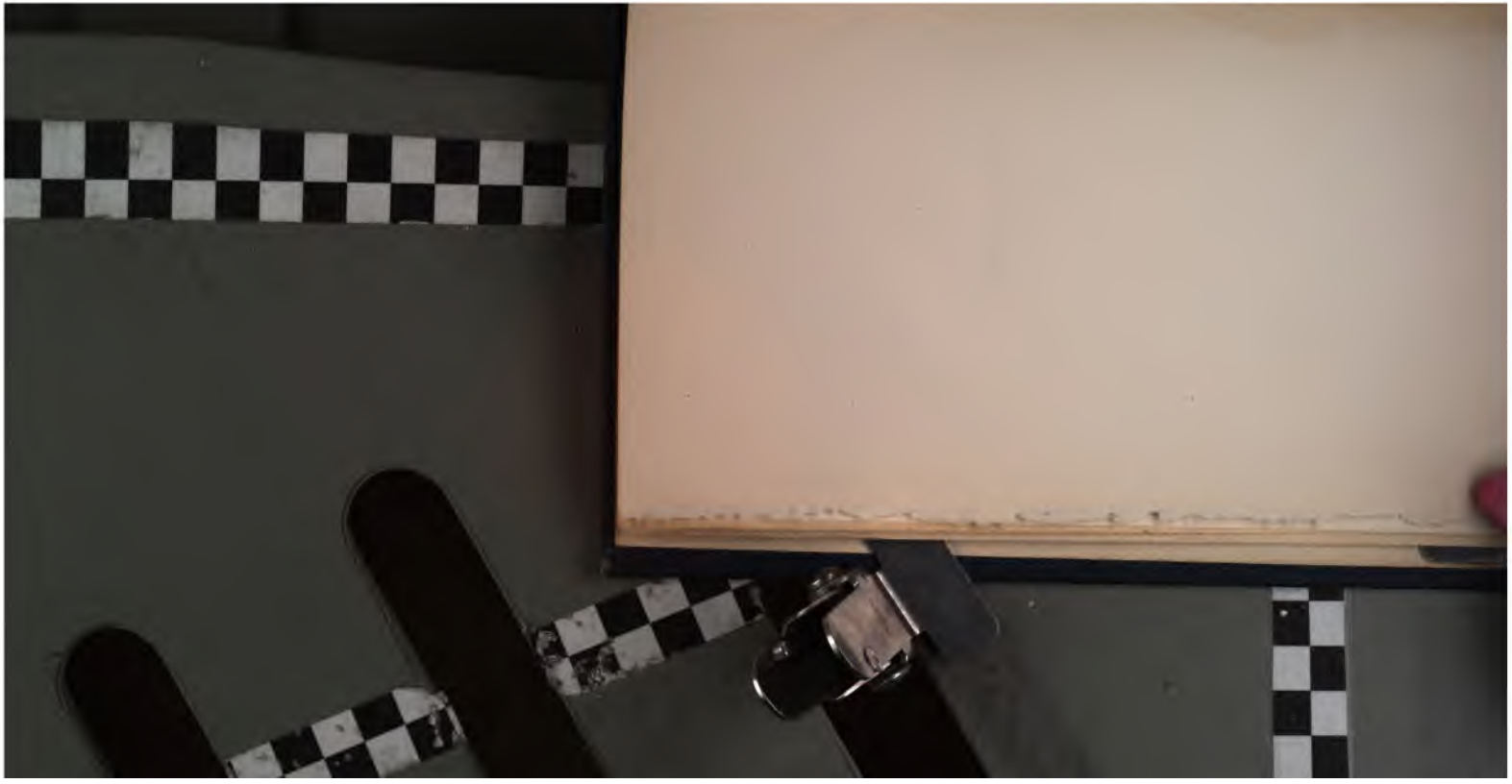

IX

Christian left him going toward the main entrance to the castle and went himself to the small gate which, in all seignioral manors, leads to the servants' quarters. Having assumed his mask, he called a servant, who helped him to unpack ; then, having assured himself that his ass was properly cared for, he ascended a secret staircase leading to the quarters of Johan, the major-domo of the new castle. That functionary did not wait for him to give his name.

"Aha! the man with the black mask!" he cried with a fraternal, patronizing air. "So you are the famous Christian Waldo! Come, come, my dear fellow, I will show you to your quarters ; you can make your preparations at your leisure, for you still have an hour before you."

He assisted Christian to carry his paraphernalia to the room which was to be his green-room, and of which the keys were given to him at his request. He locked himself in there, all alone, removed his mask in order to be comfortable, and began to set up his stage, not without rubbing his shoulders now and again ; for, while Stangstadius was not heavy, his misshapen body was so extraordinarily angular that Christian felt as if he had been carrying a bundle of gnarled stumps.

The room in which he found himself was a small salon,

with one door opening on a passageway leading t
secret staircase. The other door opened on the va
handsome gallery, called the *Hunting Gallery*, w
Christian had danced with Margaret the night b
In front of that door, which was at the end of the ga
the stage was to be placed, in full sight of the au
seated in the gallery. Christian, having measure
opening of the folding-doors, saw that his stage, w
was all prepared for the performance, would jus
through; and that he had only to put it in place
completely isolated from the spectators and in ab
privacy in his little salon. That was an excelle
rangement to assure his freedom of action, and to p
Mr. Gœfle's *incognito* as well as his own.

From the number of chairs of all sorts arran
front of the door, Christian roughly estimated th
audience would consist of about a hundred person
fortably seated, probably the ladies, and of a hu
gentlemen seated on common chairs or standing
them. The gallery, being very long and mode
wide, was better suited to his exhibition than any
in which Christian had previously *operated*. Th
coed ceiling made an excellent sounding-board.
candles in the chandeliers, already lighted, ma
room very light, and it only remained to light the
of the portable theatre to give to the different port
the little stage the fictitious depth which was nec
to produce the proper effect.

Christian did everything with the greatest car
loved his little theatre like the painstaking artist h
and he had supplied it with ingenious appliances
made it a perfect miniature of a real theatre. He
have been a successful painter of interiors and
scapes, had not the love of science compelled him

his back upon the purely decorative arts; but as he was wonderfully endowed, he rarely undertook any work, even of trivial importance, to which he did not succeed in imparting a pleasing effect, stamped with his own originality. So that his little scenes were charmingly simple, and always agreeable to the eye. He displayed a touch of coquetry in his painting sometimes, especially when he was performing before an intelligent audience, and if his patience was tried occasionally by having to give so much time to these details, he would console himself by remembering Goffredi's favorite maxim: "Always do as well as possible whatever you take the trouble to do, if it is nothing more than making a tooth-pick."

So Christian was engrossed by his preparations. Having looked into the deserted gallery by way of precaution, he placed his framework, with all its decoration and lights, in the doorway temporarily, and took his seat in the front row of the chairs intended for the audience, so that he might judge of the effect of the perspective and plan the entrances and movements of his characters.

This afforded him a rest of two or three minutes which he really needed. Although he was inured to the rigors of all climates, he soon became tired when working in the stiflingly hot atmosphere so universal in the houses of the North. He had slept only two or three hours in a chair during the preceding night, and, whether because of the excitements of the day, or because of his recent excursion on the ice with a professor of geology on his shoulders, he was surprised by one of those sudden fits of drowsiness which transport one from reality to dreamland without an appreciable interval. It seemed to him that he was in a garden on a hot summer's day, and that he heard the gravel crunching beneath a stealthy

footstep. Someone was cautiously approaching him, and he had an intuitive conviction that that someone was Margaret. So that he woke without a shock when he felt as it were a breath upon his hair; but in a moment he sprang suddenly to his feet, fully awake, and on putting his hand to his face found that the mask had fallen at his feet. As he stooped to pick it up without turning toward the person who had waked him, he started violently on hearing a well-known man's voice say to him:

"It is useless to hide your face, Christian Waldo; I have recognized you, you are Cristiano Goffredi!"

Christian turned in utter amazement, and saw standing behind him a well-dressed, cleanly-shaven individual, who was no other than Guido Massarelli.

"What! is it you?" cried Christian. "What are you doing here, when the proper place for you is at the end of a rope at a cross-roads in some forest?"

"I am of the household," replied Guido with a calm and contemptuous smile.

"You are of the baron's household? Ah! yes, to be sure, that does not surprise me! After being a swindler and a highway robber, it only remained for you to become a lackey!"

"I am not a lackey," retorted Massarelli with the same tranquillity; "I am a friend of the family, a very close friend, Christian! and it will be well for you to try to be my friend; that is the most fortunate thing that could happen to you now."

"Master Guido," said Christian, taking up his theatre and carrying it back into his green-room, "it is not necessary for us to have any discussion; but since you are living in the house, I am very glad to know where to find you."

"Is that a threat, Christian?"

"No, it is a promise. I am your debtor, my dear friend, as you know, and when I have paid my debt here, that is to say, when I have given a performance with my marionettes an hour hence, I will settle affairs with you and give you the handsomest hiding that you have ever had in your life."

Christian had returned to his green-room as he spoke; he was putting out his lights and lowering his curtains. Massarelli had followed him, closing the folding-doors as he passed through. As Christian was obliged to turn his back to him momentarily, he said to himself that the villain was quite capable of taking advantage of the tête-à-tête to try to murder him; but he despised him too much to allow his distrust to appear, and he reiterated his promise of a severe punishment for his villainies, in as placid a tone as that affected by the miserable wretch. Luckily for the imprudent Christian, Guido was not a brave man, and he kept at a safe distance, ready to fly if his adversary showed signs of offering him an instalment of his promised payment.

"Come, Christian," he said, when he thought that the young man had given full vent to his first outburst of wrath, "let us talk coolly before we come to extremities. I am ready to give you satisfaction for my treatment of you; it doesn't become you to insult with empty words a man whom you know that you cannot frighten."

"You are a pitiful cur!" retorted Christian indignantly, walking straight to him. "Demand satisfaction of you, the dastard of dastards? No, Guido, we kick a man of your sort; and then, if he shows fight, we beat him with a stick like a dog; but we don't fight with him, do you understand? Lower your tone, lower your eyes, you hound! On your knees to me, or I'll strike you now!"

Guido, pale as death, dropped to his knees without a word; great tears of fright, shame or rage rolled down his cheeks.

"That is well," said Christian, torn between disgust and pity; "now get up and be off! I forgive you; but never come in my path again, and never dare to speak to me, wherever I may meet you. You are dead to me. Leave this room, sneak; it is mine for two or three hours."

"Christian," cried Guido, rising and speaking with real or feigned vehemence, "listen to me for just five minutes!"

"No."

"Listen to me, Christian," repeated the bandit, throwing himself against the door leading to the stairway, through which Christian was trying to eject him from the room; "I have something of importance to say to you—something on which your fortune and your life depend!"

"My fortune passed into your pockets, thief!" retorted Christian, with a scornful laugh. "But it was so small a matter that I care little about it now. As for my life, just try to take it!"

"It was in my hands, Christian," replied Guido, who had recovered his self-possession, being assured of his enemy's generosity; "it may be in my hands a second time. I had been insulted by you, and vengeance called loudly upon me to kill you; but I couldn't forget that I had once loved you, and even now, in spite of your fresh insults, it rests entirely with you whether I love you again as I used to."

"Many thanks," retorted Christian, with a shrug. "Off with you! I have no time to listen to your pathetic twaddle; I have been familiar with it too long."

"I am not so guilty as you think, Christian; when I robbed you in the Carpathian mountains, it wasn't in my power to do otherwise."

"That is what everybody says who has sold himself to the devil."

"I was sold to the devil in very truth; I was the chief of a band of brigands! My confederates had discovered you; their eyes were on us; if I had not taken pains to intoxicate you, to prevent you from making a useless resistance, they would have murdered you."

"So I ought to be grateful to you; that is your conclusion?"

"My conclusion is this: I am on the road to fortune; to-morrow I shall be in a position to restore to you what I was compelled to allow those men to take from you; men whom I could not control as I wished, and who stripped me a few days later and left me in the same condition in which they had left you."

"That was well done of them; you had earned it."

"Do you remember the amount that was taken from you, Christian?"

"Perfectly."

"And will you be at the Stollborg to-morrow?"

"I don't know. That does not concern you."

"Yes it does; I will bring you that amount of money to-morrow."

"Spare yourself the trouble. I am *at home* at the Stollborg, and *I do not receive*."

"But——"

"Hold your tongue! I am tired of listening to you."

"But, if I bring you the money——"

"Is it the same that you took from me? No indeed! It's a long while since you drank that up, isn't it? Very good; as it cannot be the same money, and as it can only

be the proceeds of another robbery, or of something worse, if that is possible, I will have nothing of it. Consider that settled, and have done with your braggadocio about restitution. I am not foolish enough to believe in it, and, even if I did believe in it, I should be none the less resolved to throw the price of your vile deeds in your face."

Christian made a motion as if he would eject Guido, who took the hint and left the room. The *operante* was about to lock the door when Mr. Gœfle, all muffled up in furs, appeared at the head of the stairs, manuscript in hand. He had eaten rapidly or not at all; he had devoured the play, he had hurriedly assimilated it, and, fearing that he had not left himself sufficient time for preparation, had come on foot, by starlight, concealing his face and disguising his voice when he asked to be directed to the quarters of the marionettes; in a word, taking all the precautions of a young gallant on his way to some mysterious rendezvous. At that moment he had nothing in his head save the *burattini*, and he was thinking no more of the mysteries of the Stollborg than if his mind had never been disturbed by them; but, as he ran lightly up the staircase, he was obliged, for the second time that evening, to pass a person of forbidding aspect who was coming down, and that meeting caused his thoughts to recur to Baron Olaüs, Stenson and the deceased Hilda.

"Wait," he said to Christian, who laughingly complimented him on his zeal. "Look at that man walking along the lower corridor whom I just passed on the stairs. Did he come from here? Is he a servant of the baron's? Do you know him?"

"I know him only too well, and I have just been compelled to tell him what I think of him," replied Chris-

tian. "That man, servant or not, is Guido Massarelli, of whose adventures I told you something this morning in connection with my own."

"Oho! this is a strange meeting," cried the advocate. "Unfortunate for you perhaps. He has a grudge against you, hasn't he? And, if you treated him as he deserves, he will do you all the harm he possibly can."

"What harm can he do me? He is such a coward! I made him kneel to me."

"In that case—I don't know what he will do; I don't know what secret he has unearthed."

"A secret connected with me?"

"No," said Gœfle, who was on the point of speaking, but suddenly remembered his resolution to say nothing relative to Stenson; "but at all events you are concealing Cristiano Goffredi under the mask of Christian Waldo, and he will betray you."

"What do I care? I have not dishonored the name of Goffredi. The day will come, I trust, when my strange adventures will prove of advantage to me. Tell me, what have I to fear from public opinion? Am I indolent or dissipated? I snap my fingers at all the Massarellis in the world. Have I not made for myself, in Sweden and elsewhere, a reputation for true gallantry under my clown's mask? I am credited with more noble actions than I have had opportunity to perform, and I am a sort of legendary character. Was I not the Prince Royal of Sweden last night? If my renown becomes too hyperbolical, have I not a change of name at my service when at last I have an opportunity to lead the life of an ordinary serious-minded man? The most important point, Mr. Gœfle, and I say it solely on your account, is that the young man of last night's ball, your pretended nephew, shall not be recognized behind

Waldo's mask. Now, Massarelli was not here last night, I am certain, and he knows nothing of my adventure. He would have boasted of it to me. At all events you have only to repeat and swear to the truth, that you never had a nephew or a natural son, and that you are not in any way responsible for the tricks which the joker Christian Waldo amuses himself by playing upon society."

"So far as I am concerned, I don't care a fig after all," rejoined the advocate, removing his wig and covering the back of his neck with a light black cap which Christian handed him. "Do you suppose that I am such a coward as to care for the dragon of this castle? Look you, Christian, I propose to make my début as an exhibitor of marionettes; an *operante,* as you call it. So that, if anybody ever sneers at you for having been a travelling showman in order that you might live for the benefit of science, you can say: 'I knew a man who was engaged in the honorable practice of a learned profession, and who acted as my assistant for his own pleasure!'"

"Say rather, from kindness to me, Mr. Gœfle!"

"From friendship, if you choose: I like you, but I should lie if I should say that what we are doing is a bore to me. On the contrary, it seems to me that it is going to amuse me tremendously. In the first place the play is delightful, as comical as can be, and affecting in parts. You did well to arrange it so as to avoid all semblance of allusion. Come, Christian, we must rehearse; we have only half an hour. Let us make haste. Are we securely locked in here? Can no one see us or hear us?"

Christian had to prevent his associate from tiring his voice and exhausting his energy during the rehearsal.

The scenes being outlined in a few words on the placard inside the booth, they had only to exchange a few sentences as a groundwork upon which they were to improvise their dialogue before the audience. They had to arrange the characters in the proper order first off the stage, to practise taking them up without fumbling when it was time for them to appear, to introduce them alternately on the stage, agreeing beforehand upon the cues for their entrances and exits, as well as upon the substance of their conversation; the bulk of the dialogue and the incidental situations were left to the inspiration of the moment. The advocate was the most intelligent and delightful assistant that Christian had ever found; so that he himself was electrified by his rivalry, and when he heard the clock strike eight, he was more enthusiastic and gay than he had been since the days of his association with Massarelli, then so amiable and fascinating. That memory, now marred and blighted, caused him a moment's sadness which he speedily shook off, saying to the advocate:

"Come! I see that the gallery is filling up with people; to work, and good luck, my dear confrère!"

At that moment someone knocked on the door at the rear, and the voice of Johan the majordomo asked for Master Christian Waldo.

"Excuse me, my dear sir, but you cannot come in," said Christian. "Say what you have to say through the door. I am listening."

Johan replied that Christian must be ready when he heard three knocks on the door leading into the gallery, which would then open for his theatre to pass through.

This being agreed, a long quarter of an hour passed before each of the ladies had found the place best adapted

for the display of her skirts and her graces, and at the same time in close proximity to the cavalier whom she most affected or in sight of those whom she wished to charm. Christian, being accustomed to such manœuvring, calmly arranged on a table the refreshments which he had found in the small salon, and which would serve, at need, to lubricate his assistant's voice and his own during the entr'acte. Then he took his place with the advocate inside the framework, which was tightly closed by curtains fastened with hooks within on the front and sides. It was open at the back and sufficiently deep to enable them to command a view of all parts of the stage.

The two *operanti* awaited the three knocks, Christian calmly, Mr. Gœfle with an impatience to which he gave energetic expression.

"Are you losing your temper?" said Christian. "That's because you are excited, you see, and it's a good sign. You will be dazzlingly brilliant."

"Let us hope so," rejoined the advocate; "although, to tell you the truth, it seems to me at this moment that I shall be unable to find a word to say and shall soon come to a standstill. It is very amusing, but I am actually dizzy! Never did a speech before an assemblage of thinking men, nor a question involving the life or honor of a client, or my own success, excite my brain and stretch my nerves like the idea of acting this farce. Will not those magpies of women, whose chatter we can hear through the doors, ever stop? Do they propose to suffocate us in this booth? I shall say something insulting to them if this goes on!"

At last the three blows were struck. Two servants stationed in the gallery simultaneously threw open the two wings of the door, and the little theatre, which seemed to move of itself, was seen to come forward

noiselessiy and take its place in the doorway, which it completely filled. Four instruments, which Christian had asked for, played a brief prelude in the Italian style. The curtain rose and the applause bestowed upon the stage-setting gave the *operanti* time to take up their marionettes in order to introduce them on the stage.

But Christian did not choose to begin until he had glanced at his audience through a small eye-hole in the curtain before him. The only person whom he was looking for was the first upon whom his eye fell. Margaret was sitting beside Olga in the front row. She wore a lovely costume ; she was bewitchingly beautiful. Next, Christian noticed the baron, who was in the first row of men, behind the women. His tall figure made him very conspicuous. He was paler, if that were possible, than on the previous evening. Christian looked in vain for Massarelli's face. He was pleased to recognize Major Larrson, Lieutenant Ervin and the other young officers, who had shown such a cordial liking for him, both at the ball and afterward, and whose ruddy faces, smiling in anticipation, indicated a favorable disposition toward the entertainment. At the same time Christian heard murmurs of approval of the stage-setting.

"Why, it's the Stollborg!" said several voices.

"I verily believe," observed Baron Olaüs's metallic voice, "that he has attempted to represent the old Stollborg!"

Mr. Gœfle heard nothing and saw nobody; he was really disturbed. To give him time to recover himself, Christian began with a scene for two characters which he played without assistance. His voice adapted itself wonderfully to the voices of the different characters for whom he spoke, and he imitated all accents, putting in the

mouth of each character language suited to his rôle and his position in the play. From the very beginning he charmed his audience by the ingenuousness and fidelity to nature of his dialogue. Mr. Gœfle soon came to his assistance with the figure of an old man, and although he did not succeed at first in disguising his voice very well, the audience was so far from thinking of him and so convinced that Christian alone spoke for all the actors, that they marvelled anew at the *operante's* boundless resources.

"Wouldn't you take your oath that there were a dozen of them in there?" said Larrson.

"There are at least four," replied the lieutenant.

"No," said the major, "there are two, the master and the servant; but the servant is a blockhead who rarely speaks and who hasn't opened his mouth yet."

"But listen, now they are talking together. I hear two distinct voices."

"Pure illusion!" replied the enthusiastic Larrson. "Christian Waldo alone can act two, three, and four characters at once, yes, and more for aught I know. He's a very devil! But just listen to the play; that is not the least interesting part of the performance. He gives plays of which one would like to remember every word, and write them down."

We will not undertake, however, to describe the play to the reader. These fugitive farces are like all extemporizations, oratorical or musical. One always errs in thinking that they would be as effective if they were transcribed and preserved. Their only charm is in their unexpectedness, and one remembers them with the greater pleasure because one's memory of them is really indistinct, and the imagination attributes to them beau-

ties which they do not possess. There was vigor, animation and good taste in everything that came to Christian's mind at such moments. The imperfections inseparable from a superabundance of words disappeared in the rapidity of the action, in his skill in introducing new characters when he felt that he had had enough of those he held in his hands.

As for Mr. Gœfle, his genuine natural eloquence, his ready wit when he was excited, and his very extensive learning made it easy for him to give such assistance as was expected of him. The most amusing digressions resulted from the readiness with which he seized on the wing the fanciful flights of his associate, and the audience was even more amazed than Christian Waldo's audiences usually were by the variety of knowledge revealed by those brilliant excursions.

If we do not describe the play, we must at least tell how Christian had transformed that first act, which had so distressed the advocate.

Fearing lest he should really embarrass him by involuntary allusions, he had made the traitor of his play a purely comic character, a sort of Cassander deceived by his ward, trying to obtain possession of the *corpus delicti*, the *child of mystery*, but entertaining no criminal design with respect to him. So that Christian was greatly surprised when, having arrived at the last scene of this first act, he was conscious of a sort of thrill of excitement in the audience; and divers whisperings which might be interpreted as manifestations of blame as well as of approbation, reached his ear, which was trained to detect the feeling of the spectators amid his own words.

"What is happening, in heaven's name?" he hastily asked himself.

And he looked at the advocate, whose face wore a dis-

"What! were you deaf? didn't you hear the three horrible slips that I made?"

"Bah! I suppose I made a hundred, as I do every day; do you imagine anyone notices them?"

"Oh! indeed! you think that no one noticed, do you? I'll wager that the baron went out before the end!"

"He did, that is true. Is his ear so sensitive, pray, that a chance allusion or an improper word——"

"Ten thousand devils! if it were only that! I should have done better to cut out my tongue than to say what I said! Just fancy that, while you were stooping to push the boat under the archway, I, speaking through the mouth of the assassins, said at three different times *the baron* instead of saying Don Sancho! Yes, I said it three times! The first time without noticing it, the second time I did notice it and tried to change it, and the third—oh! what an extraordinary thing it is, Christian, that a man should say the exact thing that he is determined not to say! There was a sort of fatality about it, and I am ready to believe, with our peasants, that the evil spirits take a hand in our affairs."

"It is very curious, really," said Christian; "but there is no one who hasn't had that experience. Why the devil are you worrying so, Mr. Gœfle? The baron cannot suspect you of having done it purposely! Besides, is he the only baron there is in the world? Why, there may be a dozen of 'em in our audience. Let us think about the second act, Mr. Gœfle; time flies and they may tell us to begin at any minute."

"If they don't come and tell us to stop where we are. Hark, someone is knocking."

"It's the majordomo again. Go back into the booth, Mr. Gœfle; I will put on my mask and admit him. We must know what is going on."

When the advocate was hidden and Christian masl
the door was opened to Master Johan.

"What is it?" said Christian, in haste to come to
point. "Are we to go on?"

"Why not, pray, Master Waldo," said the majordo

"I thought that I saw that his lordship the baron
indisposed."

"Oh! it very often happens that he is taken ill wh
he stays long in one place; but it is nothing. He j
sent word to me that you are to go on, whether he
there or not. He desires you to entertain his gues
But whatever put it into your head, Master Christi
to represent our old Stollborg on your stage?"

"I thought it would please his lordship," replied Ch
tian, boldly. "Was I mistaken?"

"His lordship is delighted with your idea, and he s
again and again: 'That is very fine! that is very fin
I should think that I was looking at the tower.'"

"Good!" said Christian; "in that case we will go o
Your servant, Mr. Majordomo.—Come, Mr. Gœfle, che
up!" continued Christian as soon as Johan had gone o
"All goes well, you see, and we have done nothing b
dream all day. I will stake my head that the baron
the best of men. You will see that he has been co
verted and that we shall be obliged to canonize him!"

During the following act, which was very short a
very lively, the baron seemed to be greatly amuse
Don Sancho did not appear. Mr. Gœfle's tongue d
not go astray again, and his voice was so well disguis
that no one suspected his presence. During the entr'ac
he drank several glasses of port to keep up his anim
tion, and he was slightly tipsy during the third and la
act, which was even more successful than the precedin
ones.

Side by side with the burlesque action with which Stentarello amused the audience, Christian had introduced a sentimental plot with other characters. In this last act Alonzo, the child of the lake, discovered that Rosita, the daughter of the worthy people who had adopted him and brought him up, was not his sister, and told her of his love. This familiar stage situation has always been rather delicate to handle. People do not like to see a brother pass abruptly from fraternal affection to a passion which, despite the changed condition of affairs, has an incestuous aspect. The characters of the young maid and Alonzo were the only ones which Christian had not burlesqued. He had made the latter an excellent young man, acting and thinking like himself. This enterprising and noble character appealed to the spectators, and the women, forgetting that they had a marionette before their eyes, were fascinated by that melodious voice which spoke of love with a chaste sweetness and an honest accent very different from the affected phrases of the French pastorals of the time.

Christian had read Marivaux, that two-sided genius, so ingenious in his wit, but so simple-hearted, so affecting in the portraying of passion. He had learned to appreciate the genuine side, the great side of that fascinating genius, and he excelled in the language of love. The act seemed short; many voices cried: "Encore! encore!" and Christian, yielding to the wish of the audience, took up Alonzo, whom he had already laid down, and placed him before the audience once more in a most adroit and natural way. "Did you call me back?" he said to his young sweetheart; and that simple question was asked in such a timid, bewildered, artless tone, that Margaret put her fan before her face to hide a burning blush.

For a strange phenomenon was taking plac
young woman's heart. She alone recognized
Gœfle's voice in Alonzo's. Perhaps it was bec
alone had talked enough with him to remember
vividly. And yet Christian Waldo purposely pi
young lover's voice in a higher key than was n
him; but there were certain tones and certain i
which constantly made Margaret's heart beat
the love scene all her doubts vanished, and yet
Gœfle had never said a word of love to her.
her reflections to herself, and when Olga, wh
enthusiastic and satirical, touched her arm and
she was weeping, the innocent child replied
found dissimulation that she had a very bad
was trying not to cough.

As for Olga, she was much more hypocriti
the play was over she pretended to have th
contempt for that *moon-struck lover*, and yet
had throbbed violently; for in some Russian w
scheming is not incompatible with ardent passi
had deliberately yielded to the promptings of
ness and greed; but, in spite of herself, she ha
feeling of detestation for the baron since she h
engaged to him. When he spoke to her after
his sneering voice and his icy glance made h
and she remembered, as it were involuntarily,
voice and ardent words of Christian Waldo.

The baron, for his part, seemed in excelle
The inopportune character of Don Sancho, w
appear again at the end of the play, was
suppressed by Mr. Gœfle. In concert with
he had arranged this modification between th
second acts. They concluded to make Rosita
ter of Don Sancho, who was supposed to die

entr'acte. It was discovered that she was heir to a great fortune left by him, and, in order to atone to Alonzo for the spoliation of which he had been the victim, she married him at the end of the play. Adventures, jests, romantic incidents and comic characters, especially Stentarello with his ingenuous selfishness and cowardice, supported the fragile framework of this slight plot, which was received with enthusiastic approval, despite old Stangstadius, who did not listen to a word and found fault with everything, being unable to endure the thought that anyone could be interested in a frivolous work which did not bear upon science.

Meanwhile Mr. Gœfle had dropped into an easy-chair in the green-room, where he was once more closeted with Christian; and while the latter, always active and painstaking, took apart, folded and arranged all the scenes and mechanical appliances of his theatre, so that the whole staff could be packed in a box, and the structure itself made into a single bundle which, albeit somewhat heavy, was easy to carry, the advocate, wiping his forehead and absent-mindedly doing full justice to the Spanish wine, gave himself up unreservedly to that peculiar sense of well-being which it was his delight to enjoy when he laid aside the cap and gown to return, as he said, to the bosom of private life.

That amiable man had made few mistakes in his public life, and had had few annoyances in his domestic existence. The one thing that he had lacked since he had known the joys incident to the orderly and tranquil life of a man of mature years, was a taste of the unforeseen, which he declared and perhaps believed that he detested, but of which he felt the need none the less by reason of his vivid imagination and the wonderful flexibility of his talent. So that he felt at that moment as

a poem, set fire to the house or get tipsy, to have done with this longing to do something extraordinary."

"Beware, Mr. Gœfle," laughed Christian, "you may do it yet!"

"I? Never! never! Alas! I am sober to the point of stupidity."

"Still, the bottle is half empty; see!"

"Half a bottle of port between two is not scandalous over-indulgence, I should say?"

"I beg your pardon! I haven't touched a drop; I have had nothing but lemonade."

"In that case," said Gœfle, pushing away the glass he had just filled, "away with the perfidious stuff! To get tipsy alone is the most depressing thing in the world. Will you come to the Stollborg and try to get tipsy with me? Or—stay—I heard some one say this morning that there would be a torchlight expedition on the lake, if it did not snow again. Now, the weather was magnificent to-night, when I came down. Let us join the party. You can wear a mask, you know, if you choose, during the Christmas festivities, and—yes, I remember now that the Countess Elveda this morning mentioned a masquerade."

"An excellent idea!" said Christian; "I shall be in my element, the man in the black mask!—But where shall we get our costumes? I have a hundred or more in my box, it is true, but neither of us can possibly reduce himself to the size of our marionettes."

"Psha! perhaps we can find something at the Stollborg. Who knows?"

"It will not be in my wardrobe, I promise you."

"In mine, perhaps, then. When you can do nothing better, you put on your coat wrong side out. I tell you, with a little imagination——"

"Certainly, my dear sir; but your servant also wears a mask, it seems; for I just saw him pass through the corridor as mysteriously as yourself and more muffled up than he was when I saw him yesterday on your arrival here."

"Because the knave, instead of carrying my cloak over his arm, has the presumption to wear it. I let him do it, for he is terribly cold-blooded."

"But this is what surprises me; when I saw that cold-blooded person yesterday, he seemed to me at least a head shorter than you."

"Ah! that is what surprises you, is it?" said Christian, summoning to his aid his genius for improvisation. "Then you didn't notice what he had on his feet to-day, I presume?"

"No, I did not. Was he walking on stilts?"

"Not exactly; but on pattens four or five inches high."

"Why is that, pray?"

"What! Mr. Majordomo, a bright man like you ask me such a question?"

"I confess that I don't understand," replied Johan, biting his lip.

"Very well, Mr. Majordomo, let me tell you that if the two *operanti* in a theatre like ours are not of almost equal height, one of the two is compelled to show his head on the same level with the *burattini;* and it certainly would not produce a good effect, but would look like an inhabitant of Saturn on that little stage; or else the other, the shorter one, is compelled to hold his arms up in the air in such a tiresome position that he cannot keep it up through two scenes."

"So your servant wears pattens in order to be as tall as you? Ingenious! most ingenious, on my word! It

nephew, of whom the said majordomo had had a good view on the preceding evening.

"Tell me," he said, after many insidious questions, which the adventurer parried successfully, "suppose that some attractive lady—some charming young lady, we will say—the Countess Margaret for example—should ask to see your features—would you persist in refusing?"

"Who is the Countess Margaret?" inquired Christian artlessly, although he was sorely tempted to strike the majordomo.

"Great God!" replied Master Johan, "I mentioned the Countess Margaret because she is certainly the prettiest woman in the castle at this moment. Didn't you notice her?"

"Where could I have seen her, pray?"

"In the front row of your audience."

"Oh! if you suppose that when I am acting, almost alone, a play with twenty characters, I have any time to look at women——"

"I don't say that you do, but would not the wish to please a pretty girl have any influence on you?"

"To please?—Mr. Johan!" cried Christian, with well-feigned agitation, "you are very cruel, unintentionally, when you say that. Apparently you do not know that nature has blessed me with the most ghastly ugliness, and that that is the only cause of the pains I take to conceal my face!"

"I have heard so," rejoined Johan, "but some people say just the opposite, and his lordship, as well as all his guests, especially the ladies, is very anxious to know what to believe."

"That is a very unflattering desire which I certainly shall not gratify; and, in order to put an end to it, I propose to call you to bear witness to the fact."

"Perfectly well, did you not? This alleged ghost——"

"Surely it isn't about the ghost that you want to question me? You don't believe in it any more than I do, do you?"

"Not a bit; but there is another ghost who put in an appearance at the ball here, and whom nobody knows. You must have seen him at the Stollborg?"

"No; I didn't see any ghost at all."

"When I say ghost—You must have seen a lawyer named Gœfle, a man of great talent?"

"Yes, I had the honor of speaking with him this morning. He occupies the room with two beds."

"With his nephew?"

"I saw no nephew."

"Nephew or not, a young man of about your height, whose voice I didn't notice particularly, but whose face was very attractive; a very good-looking young man, in fact, dressed all in black."

"Good-looking? Would to God it were I, Mr. Johan! I was in such a hurry to sleep, that I can't tell you whether he was at the Stollborg. I saw nobody there but a drunken creature named Ulphilas."

"And didn't Mr. Gœfle see this stranger?"

"I don't think so."

"Doesn't he know him?"

"Ah! you remind me—Yes, yes, I know whom you mean. I heard Mr. Gœfle complaining about some fellow who had stolen his name in order to obtain admission to the ball. Is that the man?"

"Exactly."

"But in that case how does it happen, Mr. Majordomo, that, if you were so puzzled by this stranger, you did not have him followed?"

"We were not puzzled at all. He passed himself off as the lawyer's near relation; we supposed, of course, that we should see him again. Not till this morning, when Mr. Gœfle disowned him, did his lordship begin to wonder how a stranger had dared to sneak into the ball under a borrowed name. I have no doubt that it was some insolent wager, probably some student from the School of Mines at Falun—unless, indeed, as he seems to have hinted, he may be a natural son whom Mr. Gœfle has never authorized to bear his name."

"All this doesn't seem to me to be worth the trouble," rejoined Christian, in an indifferent tone; "am I at liberty to go to my supper now, Mr. Majordomo?"

"Yes, to be sure; you must sup with me."

"No, thanks; I am very tired, and I am going home."

"To the Stollborg again? You must be very uncomfortable there!"

"I am very comfortable."

"Have you a bed?"

"I shall have one to-night."

"Does that sot of an Ulphilas give you proper food?"

"It could not be better."

"You will be on hand to-morrow?"

"At what hour?"

"The same as to-day."

"Your servant, Mr. Johan."

"Oh! one word more, Mr. Waldo: would it be impertinent in me to ask your real name?"

"Not at all, Mr. Johan; my real name is Stentarello, at your service."

"Joker! Do you always do the talking for that character?"

"Always, when my servant doesn't."

"You are mysterious."

"True, when my stage secrets are in question; otherwise, no illusion and no success."

"But may I ask you why one of your characters was called the baron?"

"Oh! you must ask that question of the servants who gave Puffo liquor; as for myself, I am so accustomed to his blunders that I shouldn't have noticed it, had he not confessed it to me in dismay."

"Had he overheard some silly gossip?"

"Relating to what? Explain yourself."

"No, no, it isn't worth the trouble," replied Johan, realizing that, by the adroitness or indifference of his companion, they had changed places, in that the majordomo was being questioned instead of questioning.

However, he recurred to a question he had already asked:

"So you happened to have a scene which resembled the Stollborg so closely that it could readily be mistaken for it?"

"I had one which resembled it slightly, but I purposely made it as much like it as possible."

"Why so?"

"Haven't I told you? I did it to please his lordship the baron. It is a whim of mine to try always to represent some particular spot in the locality where I happen to be performing. At my next stopping-place the Stollborg will be transformed and the scene will represent some other place. Did his lordship think that my background was not well done? What can you expect? I had so little time!'

As he spoke, Christian amused himself by watching Johan's unprepossessing face. He was a man of about fifty years of age, rather stout, with a face of a commonplace type, which at the first glance seemed good-humored

We will leave him attending philosophically to the duty of loading his ass, and will inform the reader what had taken place during his interview with the majordomo. We will take up our story at the moment when Mr. Gœfle, favored by the rising of the moon and the reappearance of the Aurora Borealis, started rapidly across the lake for the Stollborg, unconsciously humming and gesticulating a little.

Meanwhile supper had been served to the guests at the new castle, and the magnificent Christmas cake, which, in accordance with the Norwegian custom, was to remain on the table until the 6th of January, aroused the admiration of the ladies by its size and its richness. That masterpiece of the pastry-cook's art represented, by virtue of a curious blending of the gallantry of the period with the religious spirit, the temple of Paphos. There were trees, fountains, monuments, men and women and animals. The pastry and the sugar-work in all colors imitated precious stones and fabrics, and were arranged in the most fantastic shapes.

The baron had entrusted to an elderly unmarried lady of his family, who was well-versed in the science of housekeeping and was an absolute nullity in every other respect, the duty of doing the honors of the supper, while he seized the opportunity to read a number of letters and answer them. In reality, the baron, who was never at a loss for a pretext for leaving his guests when he had something on his mind, was at that moment closeted in his study with a pale-faced man who called himself Tebaldo, but was Guido Massarelli in person.

Guido had not obtained this tête-à-tête without difficulty. Johan, being a jealous guardian of his master's ear, had tried to worm his secret out of him in order to be the first to make use of it; but Massarelli was not the

man to allow himself to be taken by surprise. He had persisted, and, after wandering about the castle all day, had succeeded at last in obtaining the interview, the result of which he had anticipated by boasting to Christian of being the friend of the family. This interview, which was carried on in French, began with an extraordinary tale to which the baron seemed to listen with ironical disdain.

"This is a most thrilling adventure," he said at last; "I would call it a most important revelation if I could place any faith in what I have heard; but I have been deceived so often in delicate matters of this sort that I must have other proof than mere words. You have told me a strange, romantic, improbable tale——"

"Which Monsieur Stenson admitted to be most exact in every detail," interrupted the Italian, "and which he did not even try to deny."

"So you say," rejoined the baron, coolly; "unfortunately I cannot be sure of it. If I question Stenson, he will certainly deny the truth of your story to me, whether it is really true or imaginary."

"That is probable, monsieur le baron; a man who is capable of a long course of dissimulation which has imposed upon you for more than twenty years, will not hesitate to keep on lying; but, if you can think of a way to overhear an interview between him and myself, you will learn the truth. I will undertake to extort it from him once more, and in your presence, provided that he has no suspicion that you are listening."

"It would not be difficult to steal into his room unnoticed, he is so deaf; but since, as he says, the person is dead, what concern have I with old Stenson's past life? It is perfectly clear that he acted with the best intentions, and, although he wronged me terribly by allow-

ing those hateful suspicions to rest upon me through his silence, as the lapse of time has put an end to them——"

"Not so completely as monsieur le baron seems to think," rejoined the Italian, who was as well-skilled as his interlocutor in enveloping himself in audacious tranquillity. "They are still the common gossip of the country people, and Christian Waldo must have picked them up on his way hither."

"Even if that were the case," replied the baron, allowing his carefully restrained passion to come to the surface for an instant, "that mountebank would not have the impudence to make them the subject of one of his wretched farces, publicly and before my face."

"And yet it was certainly a representation of the old tower. I saw the place to-day, and Christian Waldo, who is lodging at the Stollborg, must have seen it too. We Italians are very bold, monsieur le baron, we Italians are!"

"So I see, Monsieur Tebaldo. You say that this Waldo has rooms at the Stollborg? Therefore you assume that he made that scene expressly for the purpose, copied it from nature? In so short a time! it is not probable. The resemblance between his scene and the donjon is a mere accident."

"I do not think so, monsieur le baron; Waldo is a very talented fellow, and he paints as well as he improvises his dialogue."

"So you know him, do you?"

"Yes, monsieur le baron."

"What is his real name?"

"That is something which I will tell monsieur le baron if the sum of money for which I have asked does not seem exorbitant."

"What interest can I have in knowing his name?"

"A very great, a *vital* interest."

The tone in which the *soi-disant* Tebaldo pronounced this last adjective seemed to make some impression on the baron.

"You say," he continued after a pause, "that the person is dead?"

"Stenson so declares."

"And you?"

"I doubt it."

"And you think that Christian Waldo may know?"

"Christian Waldo knows nothing about it."

"You are sure?"

"I am sure."

"But do you mean to give me to understand that this fellow is the very one, who——"

"I did not say that, monsieur le baron."

"Then you mean to imply and not to tell; you want to be paid in advance for an imaginary disclosure."

"I have asked you for nothing, monsieur le baron, except your signature in case you are satisfied with what I have to say."

"I never sign anything. He who doubts my word can go without it."

"In that case, monsieur le baron, I will carry my secret away with me; the man who is at least as deeply interested in it as you are shall have it for nothing."

And Tebaldo was about to leave the study, with a decided step, when the baron called him back. The condition of affairs between the two men was perfectly natural. They were afraid of each other. The younger man had not put his hand on the door-latch before he said to himself: "I am a fool, the baron will have me murdered to prevent me from speaking."—And the baron on his side had reflected: "Perhaps he *has*

spoken already; he alone can tell me what I have to fear."

"Monsieur Tebaldo," said the baron, "suppose I should tell you that I know more about this than you think?"

"I should be delighted for your sake, monseigneur," replied the Italian.

"The person is not dead; he is here, or at all events he was here yesterday; I saw him and recognized him."

"Recognized him," echoed Massarelli in amazement.

"Yes, recognized him; I know what I am saying: this person assumed the name of Gœfle, with or without the permission of a respectable man who bears that name. So you may as well speak; you see that I am on the track and that it is absurd to try to turn my suspicions on the mountebank Waldo."

The Italian was speechless with surprise. As he had arrived that same morning, he knew nothing of the incidents of the preceding night; he had met the advocate twice without knowing who he was; he could not talk Swedish, much less Dalecarlian; he had been unable to engage in conversation with anybody but the major-domo, who spoke French a little, and who was very suspicious. So that he was absolutely ignorant of Christian's experience at the ball, and really did not know to whom the baron referred. Seeing that he was surprised and disconcerted, the baron was confirmed in the thought that he had frustrated him by his penetration.

"Come," he said, "surrender gracefully and let us have done with it. Tell me everything and rely upon receiving a reward proportioned to the service you are able to render me."

But the Italian had already recovered all his self-as-

surance. Convinced that the baron was on a false scent, and determined not to reveal his secret for nothing, he thought of nothing but gaining time and guarding against the evil trick which that man, reputed to be so terrible in his wrath, might play upon him if he refused outright to explain himself.

"Will monsieur le baron give me twenty-four thousand crowns and twenty-four hours to bring the person he is so deeply interested in knowing into his presence and placing him at his disposal?"

"Twenty-four thousand crowns! that is a mere bagatelle," rejoined the baron ironically; "but twenty-four hours is a long while!"

"It is nothing at all to a man who is all alone."

"Do you need help? I have some reliable and very clever servants."

"If I must share the twenty-four thousand crowns with them, I prefer to act alone, at my own risk."

"What is it that you propose to do, pray?"

"Whatever monsieur le baron may command!"

"Deuce take it, man; you apparently intend to propose to me——"

At that moment the baron was interrupted by a sort of scratching at one of the doors of his study.

"Wait for me here," he said to Massarelli.

And he went into an adjoining room.

Guido hurriedly reviewed the situation; being alarmed by the baron's tranquillity, he deemed it more prudent to negotiate by correspondence; so he went to the door by which he had been admitted. He found it secured by means of some secret contrivance which, although he had considerable mechanical skill, he was unable to find. He went to the window and found that it was eighty feet from the ground. Then he noiselessly tried

the door by which the baron had gone out. It was as fast as the other. The desk was open and presented an attractive assemblage of rolls of gold pieces.

"Ah!" sighed Massarelli, "the doors must be stout and the locks secure, as I am left alone with all these fascinating yellow boys!"

Thereupon he began to be seriously alarmed at his situation. He tried to listen to what was being said in the next room. He could hear absolutely nothing. But this is what was being said there:

"Well, Johan, did you succeed? Did you see this Waldo's face?"

"Yes, my lord; he is not the man who was here last night; he is a monster."

"Uglier than you?"

"I am handsome in comparison."

"Did you get a good view of him?"

"As I have of you at this moment."

"By surprise?"

"Not at all. I told him I was curious; he gratified me with a good grace."

"And the other, the false Gœfle?"

"There is no news of him."

"It is very strange! Has no one seen him anywhere?"

"Waldo didn't see him at the Stollborg, and Mr. Gœfle is not his confederate."

"But Ulphilas must have seen him?"

"Ulphilas has seen nobody at the Stollborg except Mr. Gœfle, his servant and the horrible man whom I just saw myself."

"So Mr. Gœfle has a servant? That must be our unknown in disguise."

"He is a boy of ten."

"Do you desire to make your affectionate heirs-at law burst with rage?"

"I propose to bury them all, Johan!"

"God grant it, my dear master! Shall I attend you to the dining-hall?"

"No; I prefer to go in quietly and take my guests by surprise, to-day more than ever."

The baron left the room and Johan went into the study, where Massarelli, being seriously perturbed, found the time very long.

"Come, my friend," said Johan, with his most affable air, "it is time for supper."

"But—shall I not see monsieur le baron again this evening? He told me to wait here."

"He sends word to you by me to eat your supper in peace and await his orders. Do you suppose that he has nothing to do but listen to you? Come, come, I say. Are you afraid of me? Do I look like a bad man?"

"Faith, yes," said Guido to himself, as he drew from his sleeve a stiletto, in the use of which he was very expert.

Johan saw his movement and rushed from the room. Guido tried to follow him, but two giants, who were stationed outside the door, seized him and dragged him, with a pistol at his head, to the prison of the castle, where, after searching and disarming him, they left him in the care of the keeper of the round tower, a sort of fortune-hunting bravo, a professional scoundrel, as the phrase was in those days, who bore the title of captain in the household, but never appeared in the salons.

Johan had followed him and looked on with a benignant expression while his pockets and his various articles of clothing were inspected. Having made sure that no papers were to be found, he withdrew, saying:

revenge himself and to inflict pain. If he had known of Margaret's two visits to the Stollborg, he would not have failed to refer to them with bitter mockery. Luckily Providence had protected the secret of those innocent visits, and the enemy, who would have detected therein strong indications of the presence of the false Gœfle at the Stollborg, had received no hint. Johan had questioned Ulphilas closely concerning all the persons he had seen at the Stollborg during the day; but Ulphilas had not seen Margaret, and had an excellent reason for answering most opportunely with reference to Christian, namely the terror which Christian had inspired in him with his grimaces and his threatening words in a strange tongue. Even without his mask he had appeared to him more appalling than to Johan himself, and his replies had confirmed Johan in his conviction and the baron in his error. Thus such investigations as had been made pointed to the conclusion that the comely Christian Gœfle had disappeared and that the real Christian Waldo was a monster.

The baron announced this last bit of news at the supper-table with a sort of satisfaction; for when he appeared the guests were still heaping praise on the artist, and it gave him great pleasure to despoil the man of every vestige of poetry.

"You are wrong, my lord," said Olga, "to deprive him of his prestige in the eyes of Countess Margaret, for she was moved to enthusiasm by his eloquence, and I will wager that she will take no pleasure in listening to him now."

Margaret, who was at some little distance from Olga and from the baron, pretended not to hear, so that she might avoid the necessity of answering if her host should attempt to converse with her as he had done several times during the day, without success.

she asked, leading her into a corner. "He talked to you for several minutes with his eyes fixed on me."

"That is all your imagination," replied Olga, dryly; "the baron has ceased to think of you."

"I would like to be sure of that. Tell me the truth, my dear."

"Your anxiety is not very modest, Margaret, you will allow me to say. Do you think that a man must continue to adore you, despite your cruelty?"

"Well, why not?" retorted Margaret, determined to pique her companion in order to extort the truth from her. "Perhaps I shall succeed in supplanting you just because of my cruelty!"

A flash of wounded vanity gleamed in the young Russian's eyes.

"Margaret," said she, "as you wish for war, you shall have it; here, take back your presents! you gave me a beautiful bracelet; I care no more for it; I have a more beautiful ring!"

And she took from her pocket a case containing two jewels, Margaret's bracelet and the baron's ring.

"The black diamond!" cried Margaret, recoiling in horror; "you dare to touch that?—No matter, no matter," she continued, recovering herself and kissing Olga's cheek, "I refuse the battle, my dear girl, and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for showing me this proof of your betrothal. Keep my bracelet, I beg you! Keep my gratitude and my friendship."

Olga burst into tears.

"Margaret," she said, "if you speak I am lost! I solemnly promised to keep it secret for a week, and if you allow your joy to be seen the baron will retract his word and will think of you again—especially as he still thinks of you."

in them. Then, overdone by fatigue and pain, he had gone to his room, while his guests prepared to follow out the programme arranged for the festivity, and his horses, magnificently accoutred, pawed the snow in front of his private stairway, under the guidance of a coachman who seemed to be awaiting his master.

The baron was closeted with his physician, a young man of more learning than experience, who had been in attendance upon him exclusively for more than a year.

"Doctor," he said, pushing aside a potion which the young man offered him with a timid and trembling hand, "you are treating me unwisely! More opiates, I'll wager!"

"Your lordship needs sedatives. Your nervous excitement is most intense."

"Damnation! I know that; but soothe me without depressing me; relieve me of this convulsive trembling without taking away all my strength."

The patient demanded what was impossible. The physician dared not tell him so.

"I hope," he replied, "that this draught will quiet you without weakening you."

"But will it act quickly? I would like to sleep two or three hours, then rise and attend to my affairs again. Will you assure me that I shall recover my faculties in the course of the night?"

"You drive me to despair, my lord! Do you propose to work again to-night, after the attacks of yesterday and to-day? Your mode of life is impossible."

"Have I not an exceptionally strong constitution? Haven't you told me a hundred times that you would cure me? You have deceived me, you are making sport of me, are you?"

talk, as we did last night. I fell asleep talking. You know, doctor, I have definitely decided to marry."

"The lovely Countess Margaret?"

"Not at all; she's a little fool. I am going to marry tall Olga. I shall have Russian children."

"Beautiful children beyond question."

"Yes, if my wife has good taste; for I don't believe a word of your flattery, doctor; my wife will be false to me. What do I care so long as I have an heir, so long as the cousins and second cousins get mad! I want to live long enough to see that, doctor, do you hear? Mark my words, I won't leave you a ducat! I will treat you handsomely as long as I live, so that it will be to your interest to keep me alive. I shall do the same with my wife: every year of my life she shall live more magnificently and have more beautiful jewels. After I am gone she shall have nothing unless she has laid something by. She shall not even have the guardianship of her child! Oh! I have no desire to be poisoned, I promise you!"

"You feed upon gloomy ideas, my lord. It's a bad diet."

"What nonsense that is, doctor! It's as sensible as if you should say that I have too much bile in my liver. Is it my fault?"

"Could you not try to have pleasanter thoughts? Think about that play of the marionettes, which was very amusing."

"You tell me to think about marionettes! Do you want to make an idiot of me?"

"Oh! if I could succeed in extinguishing the fire of your thoughts——"

"No compliments on my intellect, I beg; I feel that it is fast deteriorating."

"Your lordship is the only person who can detect it."

which he restored life again and again by the resources of his professional skill, and, sometimes intensely interested by his work, sometimes crushed by fatigue and repugnance, he was perplexed to know whether he really desired that his patient should recover or should die. He was a kind-hearted fellow of innocent impulses. Constant intercourse with an atheist kept him on the rack, but he was not at liberty to defend his own beliefs because contradiction exasperated the invalid. He was of a sociable and cheerful disposition; his patient was gloomy and misanthropical beneath his habitual ill-tempered and cynical raillery.

While the baron slept the festivities continued. The noise of the fireworks, the music, the howling of the hunting-dogs awakened by the stamping of the horses which were being harnessed, the laughter of the ladies in the corridors of the castle, the lights flitting over the lake, everything that was taking place around that silent and dismal chamber where the baron lay motionless and pale as death, made the young man feel more keenly his isolation and his slavery. And during that same interval the Countess Elveda was conspiring with the Russian ambassador against the liberties of Sweden, while the baron's cousins and second-cousins watched the door of the room, saying to one another:

"He will come out; he won't come out. He is sicker than he will admit; he is in better health than people think."

How were they to ascertain the truth? The servants, being entirely submissive to the imperious will of a master who paid handsomely and punished in the same way —it will be remembered that servants are still punished with flogging in Sweden,—met all questions with the invariable reply that the baron had never been in better

"You don't say that as if you meant it," rejoined the baron. "Come, if I spoke aloud, you must recall what I said and repeat it to me exactly; you know that that is what I want."

"You said nothing but incoherent, meaningless words, which did not betray any predominant idea."

"In that case your drugs must really have a good effect. The doctor who preceded you used to tell me about my dreams. They were strange, ghastly things! it seems that I have none but meaningless ones now."

"Are you not conscious of the change yourself, my lord? Are you not less fatigued than formerly when you wake?"

"No, I can't say that."

"That will come in time."

"God grant it! Now, leave me, doctor; go to bed. If I need you, I will send somebody to call you; I feel that I can go to sleep again. Send my valet to me; I will try to get into bed."

"The doctor who preceded me heard too much and repeated too much," said the young physician to himself as he retired. "The baron found it out and they quarrelled; the doctor was persecuted, driven out of the country. That is a lesson for me."

Meanwhile Christian had joined Mr. Gœfle at the Stollborg. The doctor of laws was triumphant. He had broken the lock of one of the huge closets in the keeper's chamber, and had found therein some female garments of no little magnificence.

"This," he said to Christian, "must surely be a remnant of Baroness Hilda's wardrobe, overlooked or piously preserved by Stenson; it will do very well for a masquerade, as it is very old-fashioned; it was made at least twenty years ago. See if you can get into it; she was

"True, and the same may be said of you, it seems to me!"

"Yes, but I can't get mine out.—Wait! oho! here's a letter!"

"Let me see it, let me see it!" cried the doctor of laws; "that ought to be very interesting."

"No," said Christian, "we must not read it."

"Why not?"

"Oh! I don't know; it seems like a profanation."

"In that case, I must commit many a profanation, it being my business to overhaul the secret archives of families."

Gœfle took the paper, which was yellow with age, and read what follows:

"My beloved Hilda,

"I have just reached Stockholm and have seen Count Rosenstein. So that I shall not be obliged to go to Colmar, but shall start for home on the 10th, to hold you in my arms, to love you and take care of you, and dream new dreams of happiness with you, since God has once more blessed our union. I send a messenger to you to set your mind at rest concerning my journey, which was not very uncomfortable. It was so much so, however, that I congratulated myself many times upon not having brought you, in your present condition. I had to go in the saddle all the way to Falun.—Farewell until the 15th or 16th at the latest, my best beloved. We shall have no lawsuit with Rosenstein. Everything is settled. I love you.

"ADELSTAN WALDEMORA."

"Mr. Gœfle," said Christian to the advocate, who was silently folding the dress, "does it not seem to you

"Oh! that is not proved by any means.—But hear the fusillade! The ice-party has begun, and we sit here discussing matters which no longer interest anybody, and which, after all, do not concern us. If you are in a melancholy mood to-night, stay here, my boy; I am going to take a run on the ice; I feel the need of fresh air; I have dreamed too much to-day."

Christian would have preferred to remain behind; but when he saw how excited the advocate was he was afraid to leave him to his own devices.

"Look you," he said, "let us give up the idea of disguising ourselves. As it is essential that no one should see us together with our faces uncovered, let us both wear masks. You shall be Christian Waldo, as you are the better dressed, and I, having been mistaken for my servant Puffo once to-night, will continue to play that part."

"That is an excellent scheme," cried the advocate. "Now let us be off! By the way, let us leave a light for Master Nils; if he should wake, he would be frightened, and hungry too, perhaps. I will put a chicken bone under his nose."

"Little Nils? Is he here, pray?"

"Why yes, to be sure. My first care, when I returned to-night, was to go to the stable, bring him in, undress him and put him to bed. The wretched boy would have frozen out there in the straw to-night."

"Did he recover his senses?"

"Perfectly, for the purpose of telling me that I discommoded him terribly, and of growling while I was putting him to bed."

"And what about Puffo? I didn't find him in the stable when I took my ass there."

"I didn't see him either; he must be getting tipsy

the same tradition which represents Thor, the Scandinavian Jove, brandishing his mighty hammer over his crowned head.

The aspect of that white colossus, which seemed to be floating in space, was most impressive, and no one regretted having defied the cold night air to enjoy so strange a spectacle. The Aurora Borealis was rather faint, and had, moreover, to contend against the bright light of the moon ; but the alternation of different shades of light, the constant increase and decrease of brilliancy which characterize that phenomenon, none the less imparted to the landscape a vagueness of outline and a kaleidoscopic coloring which it is hopeless to think of describing. Christian thought that he was dreaming, and he said again and again to his companion that that strange, weird landscape, despite the rigorous climate, appealed to the imagination more powerfully than anything he had seen in all his travels.

The party had started when the two friends joined it, and they followed along the side in order not to disturb its orderly progress. The ice had been carefully explored, and the road, marked out by enormous tofches, wound about the rocky projections and the little islands, covered with firs and birches, which studded the surface of the lake. A covey of handsome sleighs, four abreast, sped on the ice like arrows, keeping their distances to a hair's breadth, thanks to the skill of the drivers and the docility of the horses.

Near the shore where the *hogar* reared its illuminated crown, the water was deeper and presented an absolutely smooth surface, entirely free from obstacles. There all the sleighs halted and formed a semicircle, and the young men who were to contest for the prize drew up in a single line, awaiting the signal. The ladies and the

sleigh? Because my good Loki has no plume or stuffed bird, or horns on his head, hasn't he as good legs as the others?"

"That is for you to decide, my dear doctor," replied Christian. "You know him; you know whether he is likely to cover us with glory or with shame."

"He will cover us with glory, I am sure."

"Very good, let us take our place then."

"But poor Loki will be tired; he will be terribly heated, and God knows whether he won't have inflammation of the lungs!"

"Very well, let us stay where we are."

"The devil take your indifference, Christian; my hands are fairly itching to try my luck!"

"Very well, let us try it."

"The idea of a sensible man like myself foundering a horse he loves just to outdo a parcel of young fellows! It's absurd, isn't it, Christian?"

"It is absurd if it seems absurd to you; it all depends on the interest one takes in such amusements."

"Let us go!" cried Gœfle; "to resist the inspirations of emotion is to be reasonable, that is to say stupid. Forward, my good Loki, forward!"

"Wait!" cried Christian, jumping out of the sleigh; "let me take off his hood. How do you expect him to run, suffocating like that?"

"True, true, Christian: thanks, my boy, make haste; the others are ready."

The words were hardly out of the advocate's mouth when there was a deafening explosion of fireworks on another island behind the race-course. It was the signal for the start, a stimulant to the already breathless horses.

"Go on, go on!" cried Christian, as Gœfle tried to

"Tell me, my friend," she said in a low voice, although without any affectation of mystery; "that man in the black mask, like yours, who just passed and is racing now, is your master, Christian Waldo, is he not?"

"No, mademoiselle," replied Christian in French, without disguising his voice or his accent, "I am Christian Waldo."

"Ah! great heaven! what jesting is this!" rejoined the girl, with a thrill of joy which she could not restrain; and lowering her voice, for the young man had approached the door, "it is you, Mr. Christian Gœfle! what whim induced you to play that man's rôle to-night?"

"Perhaps I did it so that I might remain here without compromising my uncle," he replied.

"Then you care a little about remaining here?" she asked, in a tone which made Christian's heart beat fast.

He had not the courage to reply that he did not care to remain—that was beyond his strength; but he felt that it was time to put an end to this comedy, which was dangerous to himself, if not to the young countess; and yielding to an irresistible outburst of his natural loyalty, he hastily replied:

"I desired to remain in order to undeceive you; I am not what you think; I am, as I just told you, Christian Waldo."

"I do not understand," she replied; "is it not enough to have deceived me once? Why do you still persist in playing a part? Do you think that I did not recognize your voice when you talked so wittily through the mouths of Christian Waldo's marionettes? I noticed that you did more than he did."

"What do you mean by that?" queried Christian in

Christian! To be sure, a young and beautiful aunt is different from a mother.—Stay! she will certainly send Mr. Stangstadius to keep me company."

"Stangstadius!" cried Christian, "where is he? I don't see him."

"The ingenuous creature has donned a mask; he is easily recognizable, none the less; if he were anywhere near you would see him! He is not here and everybody is going."

"My lady," Margaret's coachman said to his young mistress in Dalecarlian, "her ladyship your aunt is motioning to me to follow."

"Let us go, my friend, let us go," she said; "but you are on foot, Mr. Gœfle! Get up on the box, otherwise you won't be able to go with me."

"What will your aunt say?"

Christian jumped up on the box, thinking regretfully that the conversation was at an end; but Margaret closed the window at the side and opened the one in front. The box-seat was on a level with the window. The sleigh did not make the slightest noise on the snow, where Peterson drove outside the beaten road, for he had lost his place in the procession. Moreover, the honest fellow did not understand a word of French. So the conversation continued.

"What is happening at the castle?" Christian inquired, trying to turn aside the close attention which Margaret bestowed upon him. "I haven't seen the baron here; it seems to me that he could be identified by his great height as readily as Mr. Stangstadius by his gait."

"The baron shut himself up in his room on the pretence of some unforeseen important business. That means that he is not so well. Nobody is deceived. We

"Ah! Margaret," cried Christian, involuntarily, "if only I were rich and well-born! Nay," he added, taking her hand, for she had thrown herself back in her seat, "I am not audacious enough to make a declaration of love. It would be insane on my part, for I have nothing in the world, and no family. But you have admitted me to your friendship; may I not say to you that, if I were rich and noble, I would be glad to share with you as with my sister?"

"Thanks, Christian," replied Margaret, still trembling, although reassured; "I realize the kindness of your heart, and I know the interest you take in me. But why do you say that you have no family, when your uncle's name is held in such honor? Do you not admire me," she added, trying hard to laugh, "for seeming to want to say to you—something which certainly is not in my thoughts? But no, you cannot put that construction on my words, for you are not conceited! You have a trustful nature, as I have, and you surely understand that my reason for questioning you is that I am interested to know your chances of happiness in life, with anybody, no matter whom. So tell me why you torment yourself about your birth, which many people would envy?"

"Ah! Margaret," cried Christian, "you want to know that, and I tried to tell you! We shall arrive in a moment, and then I must leave you, this time forever. I do not propose to leave behind me a memory to which I have no claim, which I should owe to a lie. Having no title to aught save scorn and forgetfulness at your hands, I accept them; I alone am to blame! Understand that Christian Gœfle does not exist. Mr. Gœfle never had a son or a nephew."

"That is not true!" cried Margaret. "He said so today at the castle; everybody repeated it but nobody

he was waving about at random, had wound itself around the tail of the wig by one of those accidents which may safely be called improbable, because they do not happen once in a thousand times. The scientist's hat, being dragged from his head by the advocate's efforts to disengage his lash, had fallen on the snow like a black bird; the wig had followed its tail, which had declined to be parted from the lash, which Mr. Gœfle had had no time to disentangle, and which, having that mass of hair coated with powder at its end, had lost all its virtue, all its stimulating effect on the spirited Loki's flanks. In the first flush of triumph Larrson, the victor, had noticed nothing; but the shrieks and objurgations of Stangstadius, who had wrapped his handkerchief about his head and was calling upon everybody for his wig, soon attracted attention.

"That's the man!" cried the wrathful geologist, pointing to the masked Gœfle; "it's that Italian mummer, the man in the silk mask! The villain did it purposely! Wait, wait, you hound of an actor! I'll give you a sound thrashing to teach you to make sport of a man like me."

A tremendous burst of laughter greeted this outbreak of wrath on the part of Stangstadius, and Christian Waldo's name was acclaimed by all who had taken part in the race. But the scene speedily changed. Stangstadius, exasperated by the laughter of those irreverent youths, rushed toward the ravisher of his wig, who stood in his sleigh, pointing piteously to the cause of his defeat, as it hung like a fish on the end of a line. At the moment that the advocate, disguising his voice, accused Stangstadius, in comical terms, of playing that wretched trick upon him in order to prevent him from whipping his horse and reaching the goal with honor, the

naturalist, who was as nimble as a monl
equal legs and his crooked arms, climbec
snatched off his hat and mask, and di
work of revenge until he recognized, v
surprise, his friend Gœfle, who was i
with unanimous applause.

Although Gœfle was not known to al
his name, being shouted by several wh
was generously applauded. The Sw
proud of their celebrities, and partic
whose talents serve to show their langu
Moreover, the honorable reputation of th
and his renowned wit assured him of th
fection of the young men. They insist
ing him the winner of the race, and he
prevent the major from giving up the pri
consisted of a curiously carved drinkir
lished with runic characters in silver.
copy of a valuable antique belonging to
lection, which had been found in the c
tions on the *hogar* several years befor

"No, my dear major," said Gœfle, pu
mask in his pocket, while Stangstadius
on his head, "I raced for honor alone, a
—that is to say my horse's—is not st
seconds' delay on account of that v
am proud of Loki and satisfied with n
be still better satisfied," he added,
the sleigh, "if I knew what had beco
beast's head-covering, for I am afrai
cold."

"Here it is," said Christian, in an und
up to him; "but, as you have been rec
nothing left for me to do but to scuttle,

Christian Waldo might have a masked servant, but it would be incongruous for you to have one."

"No, no, Christian, I won't leave you," replied Gœfle. "We will go together and take a look at the lake from the top of the *hogar;* then we will return together to the Stollborg. We will give my horse in charge to one of these peasants and climb up yonder. Let us take this path and escape the inquisitive, for every black mask arouses curiosity, and we shall certainly be surrounded and questioned in a moment."

XI

While Christian and the advocate walked stealthily away toward the mound, the greater part of the company returned to the new castle, considering the ascent of the *hogar* too laborious and the night too cold. A sort of tent had been erected, however, in an excavation halfway up, and it had been suggested that punch should be served there; but the ladies declined, and the men followed them one by one. Half an hour later, when the two friends came down from the summit where the statue was melting rapidly by reason of the close proximity of the pitch-pine torches, curiosity impelled them to enter that grotto, which was cozily furnished and made tight by canvas coated with tar; they found there only Larrson and his lieutenant. The other young men, slaves of their loves, who had retired, or of their horses, which, they feared, would take cold, had departed or were about to depart.

Osmund Larrson was an amiable your
his utmost to copy French wit, but who
for him, was wholly devoted to his native
ant Ervin Osburn was one of those ho
clearly-defined natures which cannot eve
themselves. He had all the qualities
officer and an excellent citizen, with all
of a man in the best of health who does
head about things which do not concern
was his friend, his superior officer and his
to him like his shadow, and did not move
his knowledge. He had even consulted
choice of a fiancée.

As soon as these two friends spied
rushed at him to detain him, swearing th
leave the *hogar* until he had done the
drinking with them. The punch was re
nothing to do but light it.

"I desire," cried Larrson, "to be abl
drank and smoked in the *hogar* by the l
night of the 26th and 27th of December,
who are famous in different lines, Mr. Edn
Christian Waldo."

"Christian Waldo!" exclaimed the ad
do you see him?"

"There, behind you. He is disguised
and he wears a mask, but that makes no
has lost one of his great heavy gloves, a
his white hand which I saw by chance at
which I examined so carefully that I co
among a thousand! Look you, Mr. Ch
you have a very beautiful hand, but it h
peculiarity: the little finger of your left h
bent underneath, and you can't straighte

even when you open your hand cordially and with all your heart. Don't you remember an officer at Stockholm who saw you rescue a little cabin-boy from the rage of three drunken sailors? It was near the harbor; you had just left your booth and were still masked. Your servant ran away. But for you the child would have been killed. Do you remember?"

"Yes," replied Christian; "you were the officer who was passing and who put the blackguards to flight by drawing his sword; after which you took me in your carriage. But for you I should have been murdered."

"Then there would have been one gallant fellow less in the world," said Larrson. "Will you shake hands with me again, as we did then?"

"With all my heart," replied Christian, pressing the major's hand.—"I am not in the habit," he added, removing his mask and addressing the advocate, "of concealing my face from people who inspire me with confidence and affection."

"What!" cried the major and his lieutenant with one voice, "Christian Gœfle, our acquaintance of last evening?"

"No, Christian Waldo, who stole Mr. Gœfle's name, and whom Mr. Gœfle has generously forgiven for what was a great impertinence. I recognized you last night, major."

"Ah! very good! You attended the ball in spite of the prejudices of the baron, who probably had not the good manners to invite you to be present."

"It is not the custom in any country to invite as a guest a man who is hired to amuse the guests. So I should have had no ground for taking umbrage if I had been turned out-of-doors, and I exposed myself to that risk, which was a foolish thing to do. However, I have

an excuse ; I travel in order to become
the countries which I visit, so that I car
and describe them. I am a sort of obse
who takes notes, which does not imply
matic spy. I give my attention to t
natural sciences rather than to mann
but everything has an interest for me, a
in society, the fancy seized me to ta
curious spectacle of society in all its m
the mountains, lakes, and glaciers of an
cessible region. But it seems that my f
the baron, and that is why I wore my
turned to his house to-day. Last night
not to return at all."

"And we would repeat that advice to
tian," said the major, "if the baron ha
incident of last night; but his illness
caused him to forget it. But beware
Hide your face and let us speak Fren
some fellows with the punch who may
the ball."

An enormous silver bowl, full of bl
placed upon a table of unpolished grani
gayly did the honors. But Gœfle, wh
moment before, had suddenly become t
in the morning, seemed to hesitate bet
tion to enjoy himself and the desire to

"What is the matter with you, my
Christian as he filled his glass; "do y
having laid aside my *incognito* here?"

"By no means," replied the advoca
are willing, I will tell these gentlemen
few words, to show them that they are
ing you their friend."

"Yes, yes, give us Christian Waldo's story!" cried the two officers.—"It must be very interesting," added the major, "and, if it is to be kept secret, we swear on our honor——"

"But it is too long," said Christian. "I still have two days to pass on the baron's domain. Let us appoint a meeting in some safer and warmer place."

"That is well thought of," said Gœfle. "Come to see me at the Stollborg to-morrow, gentlemen; we will dine or sup together."

"But to-morrow is the bear hunt," said the major; "will you not both take part?"

"Both? No; I am no sportsman, and I don't like bears; as for Christian, it is not in his line. Just suppose a bear should eat up one of his hands! Two are none too many to work his marionettes. Let me see your hand, Christian; that bend in your little finger is a curious thing! I had not noticed it. I suppose it was caused by a wound, wasn't it?"

"No," replied Christian, "it was so when I was born. It is less noticeable here," he added, pointing to his left hand, "but it is there none the less; however, it doesn't incommode me in the least."

"It is strange, very strange," repeated the advocate, stroking his chin as he was accustomed to do when he was perplexed.

"It isn't so very strange," rejoined Christian. "I have noticed a similar deformity in other persons. Why, I noticed it in Baron Waldemora; indeed it is more noticeable than in my case."

"Why, yes, precisely; that is what I was thinking. Both his little fingers are completely closed. Have you noticed it, gentlemen?"

"Very often," said Larrson, "and before Christian

Waldo, who gives to the poor almost all that he earns, I may say without fear of offence that those closed fingers are considered to be a sign of close-fistedness."

"And yet the baron is not sparing of his money," said Gœfle. "One might say, I agree, that his magnificent mode of life is an additional reason for grasping at wealth at any price; but his father was unselfish and his brother generous to a fault. So the closed fingers prove nothing."

"Had the baron's father and brother the same peculiar deformity?" queried Christian.

"Yes, and it was very noticeable, so I have been told. One day, when I was examining the baron's family portraits with some attention, I was surprised to notice that several of his ancestors had the bent fingers. Isn't it a very curious thing?"

"Let us hope," said Christian, "that I shall never resemble the baron in any other way. As for the bear hunt, I am dying to take part in it, even though I should lose both of my *deformed* hands, and, so far as I am concerned, I shall certainly be there."

"Come with us," cried Larrson; "I will come to pick you up in the morning."

"Early?"

"Oh! yes, to be sure; before daybreak."

"That is to say, a little before noon?" queried Christian, with a smile.

"You slander our sun," said the lieutenant; "he will rise in seven or eight hours."

"In that case, let us go to get some sleep!"

"Sleep! already?" cried the advocate. "The punch will not consent to that, I trust. I am only just beginning to recover from the emotion which Stangstadius's wig caused me. Give me a chance to breathe, Chris-

tian; I thought that you were a livelier fellow. You haven't been at all lively to-night, do you know?"

"I confess," said Christian, "I am as dismal as an Englishman."

"Why is that, pray, my nephew? for you are my nephew, I don't deny it in private, although I basely disowned you in public. Why are you melancholy?"

"I have no idea, my dear uncle; perhaps it is because I am beginning to become a genuine merry-andrew."

"Explain your aphorism."

"I have been exhibiting marionettes for three months, and that is too long. At another period of my life, which I have described to you, I plied the same trade for about the same length of time; and I felt—although in a lesser degree, for I was younger then— what I feel now, that is to say, intense excitement followed by complete prostration, great repugnance and indifference about going on with my work, a perfect fever of energy, a mild outburst of gayety or emotion when I am at work, great depression and utter contempt for myself when I take off my mask and become sedate once more like other men."

"Psha! that is my own story you are telling; I have exactly the same feeling about trying causes. Every orator, every actor, every artist and every teacher, who is compelled to exert all his powers during half of his life to teach, enlighten or amuse other people, is tired of the human race and of himself by the time the curtain falls. I am lively and jovial at this moment only because I have tried no cause for four or five days. If you should surprise me in my office, just returned from the court room, shouting at my housekeeper because she doesn't bring me my tea quickly enough, at the clients who torment me, at the doors that squeak on their hinges—at heaven knows what!—Everything irritates me. And

then I fall into my easy-chair, I take up some volume of history or philosophy—or a novel,—and I fall asleep luxuriously, utterly oblivious of my infernal profession."

"You fall asleep *luxuriously*, Mr. Gœfle, because, notwithstanding your tired nerves, you are conscious of having done something serious and useful."

"Hum! hum! not always! One cannot always have righteous causes to try, and even when trying the most righteous ones, one is never sure of pleading wholly what is fair and just. They say, Christian, that there are no foolish professions; I tell you that they are all foolish, and that is the reason why it makes little difference what one a man adopts if it opens a field for his talent. Do not despise yours; it is a hundred times more moral than mine."

"Oho! Mr. Gœfle, that is a beautiful paradox! Go on, go on, we are listening to you. You must argue that as eloquently as you can."

"I shall not be eloquent, my boys," said the advocate, when the two officers as well as Christian urged him to give free play to his imagination. "This is no place to indulge in sophistry, and I am on my vacation. I will simply say to you that the profession of entertaining one's fellow-men by fiction is the first of all professions—the first in date, beyond controversy: as soon as men learned to speak, they invented mythology, composed songs and told stories; the first from the standpoint of moral usefulness, as I would maintain against the University and against Stangstadius himself, who believes in nothing except what he can touch. Man never profits by experience; it is of no use to teach him authentic history; he will repeat again and again, with less and less frequency, if you choose, but always in proportion to his degree of civilization, the same follies and the same mis-

takes. Tell me if our own experience has been of any advantage to us? For myself, who know perfectly well that I shall be ill to-morrow for playing the young man to-night, you see that I snap my fingers at the prospect! So it is not reason which governs man, but his imagination, his dreams. Now, art, poetry, painting, music, the theatre, are dreams.—One moment, gentlemen, let me empty my glass before I pass to my second head."

"Your health, Mr. Gœfle!" cried the three friends.

"Your healths, my boys!—I continue. I do not regard Christian Waldo as an exhibitor of marionettes. What is a marionette? A piece of wood covered with rags. The wit and the intellect of Christian Waldo furnish all the interest and all the merit of his plays. Nor do I regard him simply as an actor, for to move us as he does, something more is necessary than to change his accent and his voice every moment: that is simply a clever trick. I regard him as an author, for his plays are little masterpieces, and remind one of the dainty and charming musical compositions written by illustrious Italian and German chapel-masters for theatres of this sort. They were music for children, they said, modestly. But connoisseurs took the keenest delight in them. So, gentlemen, let us give Christian Waldo his just dues."

"Yes, yes," cried the two officers, whom the punch had made effusive, "long live Christian Waldo! He is a man of genius."

"Not exactly," laughed Christian: "but I can understand now my *uncle's* contempt for the profession of advocate. He can maintain and force others to believe the most tremendous lies."

"Hold your peace, nephew, you have not the floor! I say that—But you are an ungrateful fellow, Christian! You are not an advocate, and yet you complain! You

can seek universal truth under every possible fictiti form, and you tire of making mankind fall in love with You have wit, high spirits, learning, tact, and you d yourself a merry-andrew in order to decry your work, a it may be with a view of abandoning it! Tell me, y wretch, is that your idea?"

"Yes, that is my determination," Christian replied "I have had enough of it. I thought that I could go on with it longer, but this prolonged *incognito* fatigues me, as a puerile performance unworthy of a man of sense. I must find some way to travel without begging. I have tried hard already. It is a difficult problem for a man who has nothing. The man who settles down in one place always finds work; he who wishes to keep moving is sorely embarrassed to-day. In ancient times, Mr. Gœfle, to travel meant to conquer the earth for the benefit of human progress. Men realized that it was a noble mission, the initiation of superior minds. So that the traveller was a sacred being in the eyes of the peoples, who greeted his arrival with respect and who went to him to obtain news of mankind. To-day, if the traveller is not a man of means, he must become a beggar, a thief or an actor."

"An actor!" cried Gœfle; "why that contemptuous tone? The actor, whom I prefer to call by the name of *fabulist*, because he is the interpreter of works of the imagination—*fabulata*—aims to divert men's mind from the material side of life, and, as the majority of our idiotic race are prosaic and devoted with brutal selfishness to material interests, the Cassandras who rule public opinion spurn the poets and their interpreters. If they dared they would spurn the preachers too, who talk to them of heaven, and of religion, which is an unending battle against our narrow passions, a doctrine of ideal-

ism; but they do not rebel against idealism when presented as a revealed truth. They dare not. They spurn it when it artlessly says to you: 'I propose to demonstrate the beautiful and the good by symbols and fables.' "

"And yet," said Christian, "the sacred books are full of apologues. They are the preaching of the days of obedience to law and of simple manners. You see, Mr. Gœfle, the cause of the prejudice is not just where you look for it, or at all events it is there only by deduction from a fact to which I am going to call your attention. The actor has no real connection with the rest of society. He renders society no effective service as an actor, and men esteem one another only in so far as they are mutually serviceable to one another. Consider that all other professions are closely connected with every individual's standing in society, even the priest, is an indispensable official for the establishment of the civil status even of unbelievers. As for the other professors, every man finds his hope or his support in them at some moment of his life. His hope of health depends on the physician, the magistrate and the lawyer represent the chance of winning his suit, the speculator may give him wealth, the merchant supplies him with goods, the soldier protects him, the scientist assists the growth of his business by his inventions, every teacher of any branch of human knowledge affords him the necessary instruction to enable him to fill any post; the actor alone speaks to him on every subject and gives him nothing—except good advice, for which he makes him pay at the door, and which he might have procured for himself gratis."

"Well, well, what is the force of all this eloquence?" cried Gœfle. "Are we not agreed? You are simply demonstrating what I said. Everything that smacks

Thereupon they drank the rest of the punch, and Christian attempted to take leave of the advocate, who seemed inclined to go to the new castle with the young officers and dance a reel; but he would not consent to part from his friend, who really needed rest; and so, after agreeing to meet again on the morrow, or rather on the same day, for it was two o'clock in the morning, they repaired to their respective sleighs.

"Tell me, Christian," said Mr. Gœfle, when they were seated in the sleigh and driving back to the Stollborg, "were you in earnest when you spoke of—? By the way, I notice that I have adopted the habit, I don't know how or when, of using the familiar form of address with you."*

"Pray, keep to it, Mr. Gœfle, I like it."

"But I am not old enough to take that liberty. I am not sixty yet, Christian; don't take me for a patriarch!"

"God forbid! but if that form of address in your mouth is a token of friendship——"

"Yes, to be sure it is, my boy. Now, to continue: tell me, pray——"

At that point the advocate made a long pause, and Christian thought that he had fallen asleep; but he revived, and said to him abruptly:

"Tell me this, Christian: if you were rich, what would you do with your money?"

"Why," said the young man, greatly surprised, "I would try to share my happiness with as many people as possible."

"You would be happy, then?"

"Yes, I would make a tour of the world."

"And then?"

* That is to say of calling him *du*—thou—instead of *ni*—you.

"And then? I am sure I don't know. I would write the story of my travels."

"And then?"

"I would marry so that I might have children. I adore children."

"And you would leave Sweden?"

"Who knows? I have no ties to bind me anywhere. The devil take me if—Do not think that I exaggerate. I am not drunk, but I feel a very warm affection for you, Mr. Gœfle; and may I be hanged if the pleasure of living near you would not enter largely into my decision!—But what are we talking about? I have no liking for castles in Spain, and I have never dreamed of wealth. Two days hence I shall go no one knows where, and perhaps I shall never return!"

When the two friends entered the bear chamber, they had so entirely forgotten that it was haunted, that they went to bed and to sleep without thinking of resuming their comments concerning the apparition of the preceding night.

From their respective beds they tried to continue their conversation; but, although the lawyer was still a little excited and Christian answered his questions with the utmost good-humor, sleep soon swooped down like an avalanche of feathers on the young man's mind, and the doctor of laws, after reviling Nils, who was snoring so that the windows rattled, also concluded to go to sleep.

At that moment Baron Waldemora, at the new castle, awoke.

When Johan entered his room, according to his orders, he found him already seated on his bed and half dressed.

"It is three o'clock, my lord," he said. "Have you had a little rest?"

"I have slept, Johan, but very badly. I dreamed of marionettes all night."

"Surely that was not a depressing dream, master! those marionettes were very amusing."

"Do you think so? Well, perhaps they were."

"But you laughed yourself."

"We always laugh. Life is a perpetual laugh—a very sad laugh, Johan!"

"Come, come, master, none of these black thoughts. What are your orders?"

"Nothing; if I am destined to die to-day, who can prevent it?"

"Die! What the devil put that in your head? You look superb this morning."

"But suppose I should be murdered?"

"Who would ever think of murdering you?"

"Many people, but especially that man at the ball; the man whose face and threatening manner——"

"The fellow who claimed to be Gœfle's nephew? I can't understand why you were so disturbed by that face. It doesn't resemble in the least the——"

"Hush! you never have been able to see plainly; you are near-sighted!"

"Oh no!"

"But think of the insolence of the fellow, to dare to look me in the face and defy me, in my own house and before all my guests!"

"That has happened to you more than once, and you have always laughed at it."

"And this time I fell as if I had been struck by lightning."

"It was that infernal anniversary! You know it makes you sick every year, and then you forget all about it."

"I have nothing to reproach myself for, Johan."

"Great God! do you think I mean to reproach you?"

"But what is going on in my poor head to make me have these visions?"

"Psha! it's the cold season. The same thing happens to everybody."

"Does it ever happen to you?"

"To me? Never!—I eat a great deal and you eat nothing. Come, you must take something, a little tea, if nothing more."

"Not yet. What do you think of that Italian's story?"

"That Tebaldo? You haven't told me a word of it!"

"True. Well, I will not tell you now."

"Why not?"

"It is too idiotic. And yet, do you think that Gœfle the advocate is my enemy? He must be my enemy!"

"I can't imagine why."

"Nor can I. I have always paid him handsomely, his father was devoted to me."

"And then Mr. Gœfle is a bright man, a fine talker, a man of the world and without prejudices, my word for it."

"You are mistaken; he refuses to bring suit against Rosenstein. He says I am in the wrong; he argued it with me to-day. I hate this Gœfle!"

"Already? Nonsense; wait a bit. Promise him a larger fee than usual, and he will discover that you are right."

"I did it. He answered me very insolently this morning. I tell you I hate him!"

"Very good; in that case, *what shall happen to him?*"

"I don't know yet, we will see;—but old Stenson?"

"What about old Stenson?"

"Do you think he is capable of having betrayed me?"

"When?"

"No matter when! Do you think he is deceitful?"

"I think he is an idiot."

"Idiot yourself! Stenson is shrewder than you; shrewder than I am myself, perhaps. Ah! if the Italian told me the truth!"

"You don't propose that I shall know what he told you, it seems? Have you lost confidence in me? Then cudgel your brains, go in search of information yourself, and let me go back to bed."

"You are harsh to me, Johan," said the baron with extraordinary gentleness. "Be calm, you shall know all."

"Yes, when you need me."

"I need you now. This Italian must produce his proofs if he has any. Was nothing found on him?"

"Nothing. I searched him myself."

"He told me that he had nothing. Indeed, what could he have? Do you remember Manasseh?"

"I should say so! a fellow who used to sell a good deal here, and who sold at a high price."

"He is dead."

"That makes no difference to me."

"This Italian is the man who killed him."

"A devil of an idea! What did he do it for?"

"Probably to rob him and take a letter from him."

"A letter from whom?"

"From Stenson."

"Interesting?"

"Oh! yes, indeed, if it contained what this rascal declares."

"Well, tell me, if you expect me to understand."

Thereupon the baron and his confidant continued their conversation in so low a tone that the very walls could not hear. The baron was excited. Johan shrugged his shoulders.

"That's a story to put one to sleep standing up," he said. "This cur of a Tebaldo must have invented it here in the province on the strength of mere rumors, in order to extort money from you."

"He says that he never set foot in Sweden until to-day, and that he came straight from Holland by way of Drontheim."

"That is possible. What does it matter? He picked up his information at random in the neighborhood; so many fables are current about you! It is possible, also, that in his travels he may have met that old Manasseh, who must have picked up his share of the neighborhood gossip in the old days."

"Well, what must I do?"

"You must frighten the Italian, refuse to allow yourself to be bled, and promise him——"

"How much?"

"Two or three hours in our *Chamber of Roses*."

"He won't believe in it! He must have been told that all that sort of thing fell into disuse in Sweden under the old bishop's reign."

"Do you think that the captain of the round tower needs those old relics to make a man of flesh and blood find his tongue?"

"You advise, then——?"

"That we cover him with roses until he confesses that he has been lying, or until he tells where he has hidden his proofs."

"Impossible! He will shriek, and the castle is full of people."

"What about the hunt? You must join the party, dead or alive, and everybody must go with you."

"Some one always remains behind, even if it is only my guests' servants. And the old women? They will

say that I am assuming a right which the State reserves for itself."

"Bah! bah! you can laugh in their faces! Indeed, I will undertake to arrange all that: I will say that it's a poor devil who has had his leg crushed, and that it is being amputated."

"And you will listen to his revelations?"

"To be sure! Who else, pray?"

"I should prefer to be there."

"You know very well that you have a tender heart, and that you cannot endure the sight of suffering."

"True, it disturbs my stomach. I will surely go to the hunt."

"Now go to sleep again until it is time. I will look after everything."

"And you will find the stranger?"

"He must be an accomplice. We cannot find him except by Tebaldo's statements."

"Especially as he offered to betray to me the man who—But perhaps it isn't the same one!"

"I will confess him on all those points; you can sleep in peace."

"Have you deprived the young Italian of food?"

"Never fear!"

"Go then; I will try to sleep a little more. You have soothed me, Johan. You always have good ideas, whereas I am deteriorating. Ah! my God, how fast I have grown old!"

Johan left the room, bidding Jacob wake the baron at eight o'clock. Jacob was a valet, who always slept in a small room adjoining his master's. He was a very honest fellow, with whom the baron played the part of a kind master, being well aware that it is advisable to have a few worthy people about one, if for no other pur-

pose than to be able to sleep in peace under their protection.

Christian, who always slept soundly wherever and in whatever company he might be, awoke after sleeping six hours, and rose softly to look at the sky. No signs of dawn were visible; but, as the young man was about to go back to bed, he remembered the hunting party for which preparations were probably already in progress at the new castle. Christian was not a sportsman except in the interest of natural history. Although an excellent shot, he had never had the passion for killing game in order to kill time and to show his skill; but a bear hunt offered the attraction of an experience, which, while novel and picturesque, promised to be interesting from a zoölogical standpoint. So he suddenly felt wide awake and fully determined to go to see that spectacle, intending to watch only a part of it and to return in time to prepare for his performance with Mr. Gœfle.

As he had said a few words to the doctor of laws on the subject of the hunt before they fell asleep, and had found him unfavorably disposed toward his project, Christian foresaw that he would meet with opposition from his excellent *uncle*, and knowing how obliging he was, he foresaw also that he would yield.

"The deuce!" he thought, "it is much better to steal away without waking him, and leave a note, so that he won't be anxious about me. He will be a little annoyed and it will vex him to have to breakfast alone; but he still has work of his own to do, and he has to talk again with old Stenson; I will return early enough to prevent him from feeling his loneliness very much."

He crept softly from the keeper's chamber, dressed in the bear chamber, placed his mask under his hat, from habit and as a matter of precaution, and went out by

way of the *gaard*, which was still buried in silence and darkness. Thence he went down to the orchard and thence to the lake; and there, seeing that he was much nearer the shore than if he had taken the path to the north, he crossed a narrow tract of ice, and set out for the new castle on terra firma.

At the same moment Johan crossed the ice in the opposite direction and took up his post of observation at the Stollborg, having no suspicion that his game had just taken flight.

XII

Christian did not expect to find the major at the new castle. He knew that the young officer went each night, or each morning, after the festivities at the castle, to his *bostælle*, which was not far away. As he had not thought to ask him in what direction that country house of his lay, he made no effort to find it. His purpose was to watch the preparations for the hunt from a distance, and to mingle with the servants engaged in the general *battue*.

He was still following the path along the shore of the lake when the dawn appeared and enabled him to distinguish a man coming toward him. He hastily lowered his mask, but instantly raised it again on recognizing Lieutenant Osburn.

"On my word," said the latter, holding out his hand, "I am very glad to meet you here. I was on my way to fetch you, and by this meeting we shall gain at least

half an hour of daylight. Let us hurry; the major is waiting for you."

Ervin Osburn turned back and walked ahead of his companion; after a few steps he turned toward the left into the mountains. When Christian, who followed close on his heels, had spent several minutes climbing a steep hillside, he saw below him, in a narrow ravine, two sleighs, and beside them the major, who, when he caught sight of him, ran forward with an exclamation of pleasure.

"Bravo!" he cried, "a spirit of divination makes you prompt beyond belief! How in the devil did you know that you would find us here?"

"I knew nothing about it," Christian replied, "I was going to the new castle at a venture."

"Well, luck is on our side this morning; that means that the hunt will be successful. Look you! you are excellently disguised, as you were last night; but you are neither shod nor armed for the occasion. Luckily I anticipated that, and we have everything that you need. Meanwhile, put on this cloak as a precaution, and let us be off at once. We have a long way to go, and the day will not be too long for all we have to do."

Christian took his seat beside Larrson in a small and very light sleigh, with two places, drawn by a small mountain horse. The lieutenant, with Corporal Duff, an honest old non-commissioned officer, and an expert in hunting matters, occupied another sleigh of the same pattern. The major took the lead and they set off at a gallop.

"You must know," said the major, "that we are hastening thus in order to hunt on our own account. Neither game nor good shots are lacking on the baron's estates, and he himself is a very expert and fearless hunter; but as he must necessarily consent to send or

to take to to-day's battue many of his guests who know nothing at all about hunting, and who make more pretensions than their skill warrants, it is very much to be feared that they will make more noise than anything else. Moreover, a battue conducted by peasants is not very interesting, as you will be able to see for yourself when we have made our little expedition and return over the mountain you see yonder. It is a cowardly sort of slaughter: they surround the poor bear, who sometimes refuses to leave his den; they frighten him, they worry him, and, when he finally comes out, whether to show fight or to run away, they fire at him without the slightest danger from behind the nets where they are sheltered from his rage. Now, not only does that lack the excitement of the unexpected, but it often happens that impatient and bungling participants ruin everything, and the beast is out of danger before it is possible to fire at him. We are going to work in an entirely different way, without beaters, without dogs and without a great uproar. I will tell you what to do when the time comes. And believe me, true hunting is like all true pleasures: there must be no crowd. It is a difficult game, which is enjoyable only with friends or with the best of good fellows."

"In that case," said Christian, "I have to thank you twice for choosing me to make one of this select party; but tell me, pray, how it happens that you are at liberty to kill the baron's game in advance of him. I should have supposed that he would be more jealous of his privileges as a sportsman and his rights as a landowner."

"But it is not his game that we are going to try to kill. His estates are very extensive, but the whole province does not belong to him, thank God! See those

grand mountains before us: they are on the Norwegian frontier, and at the foot of those colossal natural ramparts we shall find a group of hills called the *Blaakdal.* There a small number of peasants, who are free and own homes, live in the midst of that sublime desert, and sometimes amid the clouds, for the peaks are not often so clear and distinctly outlined as they are to-day. Well, my friends and I have bought of one of those *dannemans* —so they are called—the bear whose den he has discovered. This *danneman,* who is a very interesting man by reason of his skill in hunting, lives in a magnificent location which is very difficult of access in a sleigh; but, with the help of God and of these stout little mountain ponies, we shall succeed in getting there. We will breakfast with him; then he himself will act as our guide to the haunts of his highness the bear, who, not having been hunted down beforehand by a parcel of jabbering idiots, will await our coming without distrust, and will receive us—according to his mood at the moment. But look, Christian, see what a magnificent spectacle! Have you ever seen this phenomenon before?"

"Never," cried Christian, delighted beyond measure, "and I am very glad to see it with you. I have often heard of it—a magnificent parhelion!"

In truth, five suns were rising above the horizon. The real, the mighty orb was attended, on the right hand and the left, and below and above its radiant disk, by four other luminous images, less dazzling to the eye, but circular in shape and surrounded by multi-colored halos of marvellous beauty. As our sportsmen were driving in the opposite direction, they stopped a few moments to look back and enjoy that optical illusion, which bears a close relation to the rainbow with respect to its supposed

causes, but which is seldom seen in Europe except in the Northern countries.

At first their course lay along a fine road, then that same road became a narrow and uneven cart-road through the fields, then a footpath; and then they drove across the rough, uncultivated tracts, where only the faintest traces of a beaten path could be detected in the snow on the hillsides. Finally, Larrson, who was perfectly familiar with the country and with the capabilities of his sleigh, defied the dangers of the rugged mountain side, skirting precipices, rushing madly down the almost perpendicular sides of ravines, leaping his horse over ditches, scaling felled trees and fallen rocks, hardly deigning to turn aside for such obstacles, which seemed likely to crush the frail sleigh at any moment. Christian did not know which to admire more, the major's boldness or the skill and undaunted spirit of the wiry little horse, which he allowed to take his own course, for the animal's wonderful instinct resembled the gift of second sight. Twice the sleigh upset. It was not the fault of the horse, but of the sleigh, which, ingeniously as it was constructed, could not adapt itself quickly enough to his movements. Such mishaps sometimes have serious consequences; but they happen so often that a comparatively small proportion amount to anything. The lieutenant's sleigh, although warned by the misfortunes of the one which was breaking out the road, also came to grief several times. The occupants rolled out in the snow, shook themselves, righted the sleigh, and started on again, thinking no more of the accident than if they had alighted to relieve the horse a little. Under ordinary circumstances an overturn causes either laughter or dismay; there it simply took its place among the anticipated and inevitable accompaniments of the journey.

Christian enjoyed that exciting drive beyond expression.

"I cannot tell you how happy I am to-day!" he said to the excellent major, who looked after his comfort with brotherly solicitude.

"God be praised, my dear Christian! You were sad last night."

"It was the darkness, and the lake, whose beautiful cloak of snow was all marred and soiled by the racers so that it looked like a leaden mass under our feet. It was the *hogar*, lighted by torches which had the lugubrious effect of the torches around a sarcophagus. It was that barbarous statue of Odin, who, with his threatening hammer and his shapeless arm, seemed to be hurling some horrible malediction at the new world and our whole profane party! It was all beautiful, but it was terrible; I have a vivid imagination, and then——"

"And then, you know, you had something on your mind," said the major.

"Perhaps so; a dream, an insane idea which vanished with the return of the sun. Yes, major, the sun has as beneficent an influence on man's mind as on his body. It illuminates the soul no less than external objects. This beautiful and abnormal Northern sun is the same as the warm sun of Italy and the wild sun of France. It gives less heat, but I believe it gives more light in this land of silver and crystal than elsewhere. Here among these spotless fields of ice everything acts as a mirror, even the atmosphere. Blessed be the sun, eh, major? And blessed be you too for bringing me on this life-giving drive, which excites me and renews my vigor. Yes, yes, this is my life! motion, air, heat, cold, light! The world before me, a horse, a sleigh, a ship—bah! less than that—legs, wings, liberty!"

"You are a strange fellow, Christian! For my part I prefer to all those things a woman after my own heart."

"And so do I, God help me!" said Christian. "I am not strange at all; but a man must be able to support his family or else remain a bachelor. What would you have me do, with nothing at all? As I have no right to dream of happiness, I have at all events the consolation of being able to forget all that I lack, and to take keen delight in the sober pleasures to which I may aspire. So do not talk to me of a family and fireside. Let me dream of the strong wind which blows toward unknown lands.—I know too well, my dear fellow, that man is made to love. I feel it at this moment, sitting beside you who welcome me like a brother, and from whom I must part to-morrow forever; but since it is my fate to be unable to form lasting ties anywhere; since I have neither fatherland nor family nor profession in this world, the whole secret of my courage consists in my acquired faculty of enjoying such happiness as I can catch on the wing, and of forgetting that on the morrow it will surely vanish like a beautiful dream!—Moreover, I have reflected much since we drank the punch together in the grotto on the hogar."

"Poor fellow! you must be in love, if you did not sleep."

"In love or not, I slept the sleep of innocence; but one reflects rapidly when one has not many hours to waste in life. While I was dressing and going from the Stollborg to where I met you, one simple and useful truth became clear to me. It was this, that I made a mistake when I tried to solve the problem of an itinerant profession. I reasoned like a spoiled child of civilization. I proposed to lead the life of a sybarite. You will understand me——"

submit to the bitter necessity of breaking off their work again and again, in order to attend to trivial commissions which are accorded them as a favor, and which consume valuable time, and obstruct or delay their discoveries. Very good; let them do what I propose to do: shoulder a hammer or pickaxe and set about drilling rock or clearing waste land. What need have I of books and an inkstand? Why need I be in haste to let the scientific world know of my existence before I have something new and really interesting to tell it? I know enough now to begin to learn, that is to observe and study nature by itself. Do we not know that sublime secrets concerning the forces of nature are discovered by poor unlettered laborers in whom God has concealed, like a sacred spark, the genius of observation? And do you think, Major Larrson, that a man so passionately fond of nature as I am will fail in zeal and watchfulness because he eats black bread and sleeps on a bed of straw? May he not, by observing the formation of rocks or the composition of soil, conceive an idea that will lead to the profitable working—say, of this feldspar which is all about us, or of these uncultivated fields we are passing through? I am sure that there are sources of wealth everywhere, which man will find little by little. To be useful to all men, that is the glorious ambition of the artisan, dear Osmund; to be agreeable to the wealthy is the puerile destiny of the artist, which I am overjoyed to escape."

"What!" said the astonished major, "do you seriously mean, Christian, that you propose to turn your back on the pleasurable arts, in which you excel, on the comforts of life, which your mental resources will readily acquire, on the delights of society, where it is entirely within your power to reappear with pleasure and profit, by accepting some office at court? You have but to turn

your mind to it, and you can soon make powerful friends, who will easily obtain for you the management of some theatre or museum. If you wish—my family is noble and has powerful connections——"

"No, no, major! I am obliged to you; that would have been very well yesterday morning: then I was still a child playing truant and trying to find his road, and perhaps I should have accepted such an offer. The ball carried my mind back to my former vagaries, to the allurements of society of which I have known only too much. To-day I am a man who sees where his duty lies. Some mysterious beam found its way into my mind with this morning's sun."

Christian relapsed into deep thought. He tried to discover what chain of ideas had led him to adopt such energetic yet simple resolutions; but to no purpose did he cudgel his brains and try to ascribe it all to the influence of a sound sleep and a lovely morning: his memory constantly carried his mind back to the picture of Margaret concealing her face in her hands at the name of Christian Waldo. That stifled cry, straight from her woman's heart, had pierced the proud breast of Cristiano Goffredi. It still rang in his ears, it had filled his heart with manly shame, with sudden and unwavering courage.

"Why, I ask you," he replied, when the major reminded him of the fatigue and tedium of manual labor, "why should I constantly amuse myself, shrink from labor and shield my existence from any possible accident? As my birth gives me no privileged position in the world, whom can I blame if I have not the courage and good sense to make an honorable position for myself? Those who gave me my life? If they were here, they might reply that, when they made me healthy and strong, they did not intend to make me effeminate and

indolent, and that if it is absolutely necessary for me to walk on soft carpets and feed on sweetmeats in order to maintain my strength and my cheerful temperament, it was utterly impossible for them to anticipate such an absurd and abnormal condition of affairs."

"You are laughing at me, Christian," said the major, "and yet life without luxuries is not worth the trouble of living. Is it not man's object in life to build a nest for himself with all the care and forethought of which the bird sets the example?"

"Yes, major, that is the object of those whose future like yours is linked with a past; but do you know what it was that determined me, who have achieved nothing in the past, to become a *fabulist*, as Mr. Gœfle calls it? It was, without my knowledge but unquestionably, the dread of what is called poverty. Now that dread is rank cowardice in a man who is all alone, and there is no other way of expressing it than by the lament of which you will realize the absurd effect in the mouth of a man of so stout a frame and so excellent a constitution as mine. We will suppose a marionette's monologue. Our friend Stentarello speaks in his artless fashion: 'Alas! thrice alas! I shall sleep no more between those fine sheets! Alas! I shall never again be able to have a vanilla ice in Italy, when I am warm! Alas! when I am cold, in Sweden, I shall never again be able to put rum of the best quality in my tea! Alas! I shall never again have a lavender silk coat to dance in, nor lace cuffs to encircle my white hands! Alas! I shall never again cover my hair with violet powder and tuberose pomade! O ye stars, behold my lamentable fate! This sweet, dainty, lovable I is to be deprived of preserves in Saxony plates, silk bows for his queue, gold buckles for his shoes! Blind fortune, accursed society!

surely you owed me all those things as well as Christian Waldo, who is so expert in making his marionettes talk and gesticulate!'"

Larrson could not refrain from laughing at Christian's pleasantry.

"You are a droll fellow!" he said. "There are moments when you seem to me to speak in paradoxes, and others when I wonder if you are not as great a sage as Diogenes who broke his cup and drank from the brook itself."

"Diogenes!" rejoined Christian; "thanks! That old cynic has always seemed to me to have been a madman full to overflowing of vanity. In any event, if he was really a philosopher, and if he desired to prove to the men of his time that one can be happy and free without the luxuries of this life, he forgot the very foundation of his theory, which is that one cannot be happy and free without useful labor, and that is true of all times. To reduce oneself to the strict necessaries of life in order to devote one's time and strength to a noble task, is no sacrifice; it is the way to acquire self-esteem and peace of mind; but, without that object in view, stoicism is mere folly, and I consider that those who confess that they are good for nothing else than to amuse themselves are vastly more sensible and more agreeable."

While conversing thus our sportsmen came in sight of the rustic dwelling where they were expected. It blended so perfectly with the natural terraces of the mountain, that it could hardly be distinguished at a little distance except for the smoke which floated upward from it.

"You are about to see a most excellent man," said the major; "a typical specimen of Dalecarlian pride and simplicity. There is also a very unattractive person in the house, but perhaps we shall not see her."

"So much the worse!" replied Christian; "I am interested in all sorts of people as well as in all sorts of things in this strange country. Who is this unattractive person, pray?"

"A sister of the *danneman*, an insane or idiotic old woman, who is said to have been beautiful long ago, and concerning whom all sorts of strange stories are told. It is said that Baron Olaüs got her with child, and that the baroness his wife—whose ashes he wears in a ring—caused her to be carried off and the child to be put to death from retroactive jealousy. That is supposed to be the cause of the poor creature's madness. However, I do not answer for the truth of all these stories, and I take little interest in a creature who could have allowed herself to be vanquished by the charms of the Snow Man. She is very tiresome sometimes with her ballads and her prosing; at other times she is invisible or dumb. May we have the good luck to happen upon one of those times! Here we are. Go in quickly and warm yourself while the lieutenant and the corporal unload our supplies."

Joë Bœtsoï the *danneman* was standing in his doorway. He was a finely-built man of about forty-five, with harsh features in marked contrast to his frank and gentle glance. He was very neatly dressed, and came forward deliberately, with open hand and a dignified air, his cap on his head.

"Welcome," he said to the major; "your friends are mine."

And he offered his hand to Christian, Osburn and the corporal in turn.

"I expected you," he said, "but in spite of that you must not expect to find much luxury or an abundance of provisions in my house. You know, Major Larrson,

this is a poor country, but all that I have is yours and your friends'."

"Don't put yourself out in the least, Danneman Bœtsoï," the major replied. "If I had come alone I would have asked to share your oatmeal and your beer; but, as I have brought three of my friends, I laid in a stock of provisions beforehand, in order not to cause you any embarrassment."

Thereupon ensued a dispute in Dalecarlian between the officer and the peasant, which Christian did not understand, but which the lieutenant explained to him as he opened the baskets.

"We have brought, as it was right we should, enough to make a passable breakfast in this hut; but, while he apologizes for having nothing to offer us, the worthy fellow has done his utmost, and it is easy to see from his long face that our forethought hurts him and seems to him to cast a doubt on his hospitality."

"In that case," said Christian, "let us not wound the honest fellow's feelings; let us keep our provisions and eat what he has prepared for us. His house looks very neat, and here are his daughters, ugly to be sure, but spruce and clean, laying the table."

"Let us make a compromise," said the lieutenant; "let us put it all together and invite the family to share our breakfast as we share theirs. I am going to propose it to the *danneman*—that is, if the major approves."

The lieutenant never took any step whatsoever without that qualification.

The proposition, being made by the major, was accepted by the *danneman* with a half-satisfied air.

"It will be like a wedding feast," he said, with an uneasy smile, "to which each brings his own dish."

However, he accepted; but, despite Christian's hints,

there was no question of the women sitting at the table. That would have been too directly opposed to the customs of the country, and the young officers would have been afraid of making themselves ridiculous by suggesting to the *danneman* so great an infraction of the dignity of the head of a family.

While some unpacked the baskets and others talked, Christian examined the house outside and in. It was built on the same principle that he had previously noticed in the case of the *gaard* at the Stollborg: trunks of fir trees calked with moss, painted red on the outside; roof of birch-bark covered with earth and turf. As the snow, which falls in vast quantities in that mountainous region, might have proved too heavy for the roof, it had been carefully swept, and the *danneman's* goat, at least a third larger than those of our climate, bleated plaintively at sight of the fresh grass thus laid bare.

It was so hot inside that they all threw aside coats and caps and sat in their shirt-sleeves. The cottage, although spacious and comfortable compared with many others in the neighborhood, was very small; but it was graceful in shape, and its outer gallery, sheltered by the overhanging edge of the roof, gave it the picturesque and comfortable appearance of a Swiss chalet. A single room, protected from the outer air by a small porch, sufficed for the needs of the whole family, which consisted of five persons: the *danneman*, who was a widower, his sister, a son of five years, and two daughters much older. The stove was a cylinder of Dutch brick, four feet high, with a smoke-pipe at the top, and stood in the centre of the house. The bare earth was strewn, by way of carpet, with fir leaves which diffused a pleasant and healthy odor.

Christian wondered where all the family slept, for he

saw only two beds, set in the wall, like bunks on shipboard. They explained to him that they were the *danneman's* bed and his sister's. The children slept on benches, with the skins of wild beasts for bed clothes.

"But," said the major to Christian, who inquired with interest about everything he saw, "while you find here the primitive habits of our thoroughbred mountaineers, you will find at the same time a sort of luxury peculiar to our host's trade and due to the great abundance of game in these wild regions. I have told you that Bœtsoï is an experienced and skilful hunter; but you must know that he is skilful not only in tracking big game, but in killing it without injuring the valuable pelts, and in preparing and curing them. We always apply to him when we want something fine at a reasonable price; doeskin sheets, which make the coolest and softest bedclothes in summer, and will wash like linen; long-haired black bearskins for sleighs; cloaks of seal-skin, which are impervious to rain and snow and to the autumn fogs, which are the most penetrating and unhealthy of all; in a word, anything rare and curious in the way of furs, for Joë Bœtsoï has travelled a great deal in cold countries, and he maintains relations with hunters who send him the articles he deals in by nomad Laplanders and Norwegian traders, the caravans of the North, whose camel is the reindeer, and whose trade is often simply a matter of barter, after the fashion of the ancients."

Christian was curious to see the *danneman's* stock. Bœtsoï, thinking that he wished to purchase something, led the way, followed by Christian and the major, to a little shed where the skins were hanging, and begged Larrson to dispose of any or all of them to his friend on satisfactory terms, and not to let him know the price until it was handed to him.

"You know as much about their value as I do," he said, "and you are the master in my house."

Christian, to whom Larrson translated these words, marvelled at the Dalecarlian's confidence, and asked if it was extended to everyone who accepted his hospitality.

"It is generally unbounded," replied the major. "Manners and morals are patriarchal here. The Dalecarlian, the Swiss of the North, has some great and uncouth virtues; but he inhabits a poverty-stricken country. The working of the mines brings many vagrants here, and that subterranean world often gives shelter to criminals, who thus escape for a long time sentences imposed upon them in other provinces. The peasant, when he is neither land-owner nor miner, is so poor that he is sometimes compelled to beg or to steal. And yet the number of criminals is exceedingly small in proportion to the number of destitute people, to whose welfare the privileged classes pay no heed whatsoever. Thus the well-to-do peasant cannot trust every passing stranger, nor does he trust the noble, who invariably votes in the Diet to forward his own interests as opposed to those of the other orders. But the soldier, especially the member of the *indelta*, is the peasant's friend. We are the most independent power imaginable, since the law assures us a comfortable and honorable existence in spite of every adverse influence. Everybody knows that we are generally devoted to the royal power, when it stands as the mainstay of the people against the abuses of the nobility. That is its proper rôle in our view, and the peasant who makes common cause with it does not go astray. Let things take their course, Christian; a time will come when the Diet and the Senate will be obliged to reckon with the middle class and the peasant! Our king does not dare. Our Queen Ulrica would dare, if her husband

had a spark of energy; but would Frederick the Great's sister pause in her course, if she once succeeded in crushing the arrogance and ambition of the *jarls?* I doubt it. She would think solely of extending the royal power, not admitting that public liberty should gain by that extension. So that our hope lies in Henry, the Prince Royal. He is a man of genius and of action! Yes, yes, the time will come. Forgive me! I am forgetting that you want to look at furs, and that you take little interest in the politics of our country; but be sure that the Prince Royal——"

"Yes, yes, the Prince Royal," echoed the lieutenant, as he followed Christian and the major into the shed.

With that he relapsed into silence and meditation, trying to commit to memory the memorable words his friend had just uttered, in order that he might form a decided opinion touching the position of his country, concerning which he would have given himself little uneasiness if he had taken counsel only of the philosophical apathy which was natural to him; but the major had an idea, therefore the lieutenant must needs have one also, and what other could he have?—This reasoning led him to place his hope and his trust unreservedly in the genius of the Prince Royal. Were he and Larrson mistaken? Henry—afterwards Gustavus III.—possessed many eminent qualities: eloquence, courage, learning, and unquestionably, at the outset of his career, love of the true and ambition to do right; but he was destined, like Charles XII. and many another, to yield to the impulses of his own passions when they combated his zeal for the public welfare. After rescuing Sweden from the grasp of an oligarchy, he ruined her by a blind display of pomp and splendor and by the false scheming of a policy not inspired by virtue; and yet he was a great man

at that moment of his life when, without shedding one drop of blood, he succeeded in delivering his people from the tyranny of a caste fatally led on by its privileges to shatter the equilibrium of society.

Christian, from what he had been able to glean of the situation of the country and of the presumptive character of the heir to the throne, shared to the full the major's hopes and illusions; nevertheless, he was more engrossed for the moment, not in selecting the lining for a winter garment—for he could not think of purchasing it,—but in examining the pelts which were heaped up in the *danneman's* small storehouse. It was equivalent to a lecture in natural history, so far as some species were concerned, and Larrson, who was a renowned hunter, told him in what parts of Northern Europe those species were to be found.

"As we are going to indulge in a bear hunt directly," he said in conclusion, "it is as well that you should know beforehand what variety we shall have to deal with. According to *Danneman* Bœtsoï it is a half-breed; but it is not yet proved to the satisfaction of anybody that the different species interbreed. There are three species in Norway: the *bress-diur*, which feeds on leaves and grass and is very fond of milk and honey; the *ildgiers-diur*, which eats flesh; and the *myrebiorn*, which feeds on insects. As to the white bear of the polar seas, which is a fourth family and quite distinct, I need not tell you that we do not know him."

"And yet here are two polar bears' skins, which I judge to be not the least valuable pieces in the *danneman's* collection. Has he hunted as far north as the Arctic Ocean?"

"It is very possible," replied the major. "At all events, he is, as I have told you, in more or less frequent

communication with the Far North, and he often travels two hundred leagues in his sleigh, in midwinter, to exchange merchandise with hunters who have come quite as far, on snowshoes or with their reindeer, to meet him. This very day he declares that he will show us a cross between a white bear and a black, for the fellow's coat looked to him like a mixture; but as he has seen him only at night, by the very deceptive light of the Aurora Borealis, I make no promises. The bear is such a suspicious beast that his ways are still full of mystery even in our country, where he was very abundant a hundred years ago and is still quite common. So that we don't know whether the bear with the mixed coat is a cross or a distinct species. Some think that, as the white coat is a winter garment, the mixed coat is the beginning or the end of an annual metamorphosis; others declare that the white bear is white at all seasons; but you probably know more than I do about all this, Christian. You have read so many books which I know by name only."

"The very fact that I have read so many books is what makes me unable to solve your doubts. Buffon contradicts Wormsius in this very matter of the bear, and all the scientists contradict one another on almost every subject, which fact does not prevent them from contradicting themselves. Generally it isn't their fault; most natural laws are in the enigmatical stage, and if the manners and customs of animals which live on the earth's surface are still so little or so imperfectly observed, think of the secrets confined in the bowels of the earth! That is what made me say to you not long ago that any man, however insignificant, may discover wonderful things; but let us return to our bears, or rather let us make haste and breakfast, so that we may go out

and find them. I have discovered but one fault in the Swedes, my dear fellow, and that is that they eat too often and too long. I could understand it if their days were twenty hours long; but when I see the tiny arc that the sun still has to traverse before disappearing below the horizon, I wonder at what hour you expect to hunt."

"Patience, dear Christian!" laughed the major; "the bear-hunt is not a long affair. It is a sudden stroke, successful or unsuccessful, according to whether you land two bullets in the enemy's head or he disarms you and floors you with the back of his paw. Here comes the *danneman* to tell us that breakfast is ready. Let us go."

The repast brought by the officers was very palatable; but Christian saw that the young women and the *danneman* himself eyed the toothsome dishes with a sort of melancholy humiliation, and that, after hospitably proffering their more humble fare, they hardly dared to produce it. Thereupon he made it his duty to partake of it and to praise it, a courteous act which cost him nothing, for the *danneman's* smoked salmon and freshly-killed game were excellent, the reindeer butter delicious, the turnips tender and sweet, and the thorn-berry preserve aromatic and refreshing. He cared less for the sour milk served in pewter jugs for drinking purposes. He preferred the wine made from berries of another species of thorn which grows abundantly in that region, and is eaten and preserved in innumerable ways. He praised also the Christmas cake served at dessert; it had been made expressly for the *danneman's* guests, because the one made for the family must, according to custom, remain intact until the Epiphany. The *danneman* resolutely plunged his knife into the splendid edifice of wheat flour, and overthrew the turrets and steeples cunningly

constructed by his daughters. Those tall, dark young women, not at all pretty, but well built and coquettishly bedecked with ribbons and jewels over an abundance of white linen and braided black hair, were then for the first time invited to take their share of the cake and to wet their lips in their father's goblet after he had filled it with strong beer. They remained standing and, before drinking, made a low reverence to their guests and offered them a New Year's greeting.

The impatience which Christian ordinarily felt at table when his hunger was satisfied, was replaced by profound meditation. His companions were noisy enough, although they had abstained from wine and brandy lest they should allow themselves to be surprised by drunkenness when it was time for the hunt to begin. The *danneman*, who was reserved at first and a little shy, had become more expansive, and seemed to have conceived a peculiar liking for his stranger guest; but, although he knew all the dialects of the Northland, and even Finnish and the Russian dialect of Archangel, he could speak Swedish, his own native language, only with great difficulty. Christian, who, with his usual interest and facility, was already beginning to understand Dalecarlian, had grasped only vaguely, and principally by favor of the narrator's pantomime, the interesting tales of his hunts and his travels which the other guests had urged him to tell and had listened to with great eagerness.

Fatigued by the constant effort he was obliged to make and by the excessive heat of the room, Christian had walked away from the stove and the table. He looked through the window at the magnificent landscape overlooked by the chalet, which stood on the brink of a deep granite-walled gorge, whose black sides, streaked with frozen waterfalls, rose perpendicularly over the bed of

the torrent. The fields which sloped down toward the ravine were in many places so steep that the snow could not maintain its position against the fierce winds, and they lay bare in the sunlight, their green carpet slightly powdered with frost, and gleaming like millions of pale emeralds. These bits of pale verdure, triumphant over the snow, were set off by the dark, almost black green of the gigantic pines, rising in serried ranks like monuments from the abyss, and fringed with fantastic icicles. Those which stood in the clefts where the snow lay deep were buried to half the height of their trunks, and the trunks were sometimes one hundred and sixty feet in height. Their branches overladen with icicles, bent and buried their ends in the snow, stiff as the buttresses of Gothic cathedrals. On the horizon, the steep peaks of the Svenberg, the abode of eternal snow, reared their rose-hued crests aloft in the amethyst-colored sky. It was about eleven o'clock in the forenoon; the sun was already casting its rays into the bluish depths which, at the time of Christian's arrival on the mountain, were still buried in the cold and gloom of night. The color of the light changed every instant, like the opal.

Every artistic traveller has described the beauty of the snow-enveloped landscapes in the latitudes which are, so to speak, their favorite stage. In France the snow never attains its full splendor; only in hilly regions, and on the rare days when it resists the action of the sun, can we form an idea of the gorgeous colors which it assumes and of the transparent beauty of the shadows which flit across its surface. Christian's enthusiasm was aroused. Comparing the relative comfort of the chalet—although somewhat excessive in respect to warmth—with the rugged solemnity of the spectacle without, he began to reflect upon the *danneman's* life, and to form so vivid an

idea of it in his imagination that he furtively appropriated it to himself, and fancied that he was at home, among his own family, in his own country.

There is no one of us who, when profoundly impressed by some situation, does not become absorbed in one of those peculiar reveries in which the present moment appears double to us—that is to say reflected in the mind like an object in a mirror. We imagine that we are passing over a road we have passed over before, that we are in the company of persons whom we have known in some other phase of existence, and that we are living over again, in every detail, some scene out of the past. This species of hallucination of the memory became so complete in Christian's case, that it seemed to him that he had at some time understood that Dalecarlian dialect, but now so unintelligible to him, and as he listened mechanically to the *danneman's* soft, grave speech, he began to finish his sentences before him and to apply a meaning to them. Suddenly he rose, not unlike a somnambulist, and exclaimed, with intense emotion, convulsively grasping the major's shoulders:

"I understand! It is very strange, but I understand! Did not the *danneman* just say that he had twelve cows, three of which became so wild during last summer, that he could not bring them home in the autumn? that he thought they were lost, and that he was obliged to shoot one of them, to prevent her from disappearing like the others?"

"He did say that," replied the major, "but he did not tell it as of last summer. He said that it happened about twenty years ago."

"No matter," said Christian, "you see that I understood about every word. How do you explain that, Osmund?"

"I don't know, but I am less surprised at it than you are; it is a result of your incredible facility in learning all languages, construing them and explaining them in your mind by the analogies they bear to one another."

"No, this didn't come to me in that way; it came like a reminiscence."

"That is possible too. You must have studied in your childhood a multitude of things which you remember confusedly. Let us see; listen to what these girls say; do you understand it?"

"No," said Christian, "it has all gone from me. The phenomenon has ceased; I can't understand a word."

And he turned back to the window, trying to renew the mysterious revelations by listening to the conversation of the hosts; but in vain. His vague reveries faded away, and, in spite of his efforts, reason and reality resumed their customary sway over his mind.

But in a few moments he entered upon another line of contemplation. This time it was no fantastic vision of the past which appeared to him, but a dream of the future logically deduced from the resolutions he had formed and had discussed with the major an hour earlier. He saw himself clad like the *danneman* in a sleeveless cloak over a jacket with long tight sleeves, yellow leather gaiters over woollen stockings, and with his hair cut square across his forehead, seated beside his red-hot stove, and narrating to some rare visitor his expeditions over the ice fields, or in the eddies of the terrible whirlpool Maëlstrom, or among the blind paths of the Syltfield.

In that unlovely but peaceful home to which he looked forward as the simple recompense of his journeyings and his labors, he tried naturally to imagine a companion sharing the rustic occupations of his mature years. He scrutinized closely the *danneman's* daughters; those

masculine and rugged creatures were not beautiful enough for him to take delight in the thought of being the husband of one of them. He would rather remain a bachelor than be unable to live in mind as well as in body with his life's companion. In spite of him the image of Margaret flitted through his dreams in the guise of a dainty, fair-haired fairy disguised as a maid of the mountains, and sweeter in the white waist and green skirt than in her dress with hoops and her satin slippers. But this fanciful costume was simply a momentary disguise. Margaret was a figure taken from another frame; she could do more than glide smilingly through the chalet and disappear in the blue and silver sleigh lined with swansdown, wherein Christian was forever prohibited from taking his seat by her side.

"Begone, Margaret!" he said to himself. "Why did you come here. An abyss lies between us, and you are to me simply a vision dancing in the moonlight. The wife I shall have will be a solid reality—or rather, I shall have no wife. I must be a miner, or a ploughman, or a wandering trader like my host, for a score of years or more, before I am able to build my nest on the peak of one of these cliffs. Well, then, at the age of fifty or thereabout, I will settle in some superb location; I will lead the life of an anchorite there, and I will bring up some deserted child who will love me as I loved Goffredi. Why not? If between now and then I discover something that is of benefit to my fellow-men, shall I not be happy?"

Thus did Christian revolve in his brain the problem of his destiny; but his dream of happiness, however modest its scope, always crumbled at the idea of solitude.

"Why, in heaven's name," he said to himself, "have I been thus beset for twenty-four hours with these seri-

ous thoughts of love? Hitherto I have given but little thought to the morrow. Let me see if I cannot apply to these flutterings and outcries of my heart the same excellent philosophy with which I argued against the material comforts of life in talking with Osmund? If I have succeeded in forgetting myself, or at all events in dealing sternly with myself as a mere creature of flesh and blood in my scheme of reform, can I not also impose silence on my imagination, which is beginning to cherish the idea of mental happiness? Come, come, Christian, inasmuch as you have proved and decided that you had no claim to individual happiness, can you not make the best of it, and say to yourself: 'This is no time to inhale the perfume of roses, but to march on through the brambles without looking behind you?'"

He felt as if his heart were breaking in the midst of that mighty effort of his will, and his face was flooded with tears which he concealed with his hands, pretending that he was asleep.

"Well, well, Christian," cried the major, rising from the table, "is this the time to sleep, for you who were the most eager for the hunt? Come and drink the stirrup-cup and let us be off."

Christian sprang to his feet with a *bravo*. His eyes were wet, but his cordial smile forbade any suspicion that he had been weeping.

"The question now," said the major, "is which of us will have the honor of first attacking his furry majesty."

"Shall we not decide that by lot?" said Christian. "I thought that that was the custom."

"And so it is, of course; but you entertained us so well last night that we were discussing just now what we could do to thank you for it, and this is what the lieutenant and I have decided upon, with the assent of

of sight. Take my advice, Christian, and undertake the attack, if you want to see something interesting. Otherwise, it may be that you will see nothing except the dead beast after the battle, for it seems that he is intrenched in a very narrow place, behind some dense underbrush."

"Then I accept," said Christian, "and I promise to show you a bear hunt on my stage to-night, in which I will try to introduce some amusing features. Yes, yes, I will be as amusing as I possibly can be, in order to show you my gratitude. And now, major, tell me what I must do, and how I must set to work to despatch a bear neatly, without causing him too much pain, for I am a sentimental sportsman, and I am bound to confess that I haven't the faintest trace of the instinct of ferocity."

"What!" cried the major, "have you never even seen a bear killed?"

"Never."

"Oh! then it's a very different matter; we withdraw our proposition. No one of us has any desire to see you maimed for life, my dear Christian! Isn't that so, my friends? And what would Countess Margaret say if we should bring her partner back to her with a broken leg?"

The lieutenant and corporal were of the opinion that a novice should not be exposed to the risk of a serious encounter with the savage beast; but Margaret's name, which Christian was very sorry to hear, made his heart beat fast. From that moment he displayed as much ardor in claiming the favor they had offered him, as he had previously displayed of modesty or indifference.

"If I succeed in killing the bear with some little grace," he thought, "perhaps that barbarian princess will blush a little less for our dead and gone friendship;

and he was trying once more to persuade Christian, when the *danneman* requested everybody to leave the room except the stranger. Larrson divined his purpose and undertook to explain it to Christian.

"You must make up your mind," he said, "to go through with some cabalistic performance. I have told you that our peasants believe in all sorts of mysterious divinities and influences. I see that the *danneman* will not set out with confidence to guide you to the bear's den, unless he has made you invulnerable by some mystic formula or talisman of his invention. Are you willing?"

"I should say so!" cried Christian. "I am eager for a glimpse of anything that will give me an insight into the manners of the people. Leave me alone with the *danneman*, my dear major, and, if he shows me the devil, I promise to give you an exact description of him."

When the *danneman* was alone with his guest, he took his hand and said to him in Swedish:

"Don't be afraid."

Then he led him to one of the two beds which formed a recess at the end of the room, and after calling three times: "Karina, Karina, Karina!" he pulled aside an old stained leather curtain and disclosed an angular figure and a face of a ghastly pallor.

It was a woman, very old and ill, who seemed to rouse herself with an effort, and whom the *danneman* assisted to rise so that she could look at Christian. At the same time he said again to the latter:

"Don't be afraid!" adding: "This is my sister, of whom you may have heard; a famous *seer*, a *vala* of the old time!"

The old woman, whose sleep had been undisturbed by the noise of the dishes and the conversation, seemed to be trying to collect her thoughts. Her livid face was

"She is always like this at the beginning. Ask her gently and she will tell you your destiny."

Christian renewed his request, and the seer replied at last, still concealing her eyes with her bloodless hands, and adopting a poetic form of words which she seemed to have learned by heart.

"The devourer howls among the furze, his bonds break, he rushes forward! He rushes toward the east, through valleys full of peat and slime and poisonous herbs."

"Do you mean by that that he will escape us?" said the *danneman*, listening to his sister with religious attention.

"I see," she continued, "I see perjurers and murderers walking in stinking torrents! *Do you understand that? Do you know what I mean?*"

"No, I have no idea at all," replied Christian, who recognized the refrain of the ancient Scandinavian chants of the *Voluspa*, and who fancied, also, that he recognized the voice of the bowlders of the Stollborg.

"Don't interrupt her," said the *danneman*. "Go on, Karina, we are listening to you."

"I saw the fire burning in the halls of the rich," she replied, "but death stood at the door."

"Do you say that for this young man?" the *danneman* asked his sister.

She continued, apparently not hearing the question:

"One day, in a field, I gave my clothes to two wooden men. When they put them on, they seemed like heroes: naked man is timid."

"There! you see!" cried Bœtsoï, looking at Christian with an air of artless triumph; "now she is speaking clearly, I should say!"

"Do you think so?"

stake; but I will explain to you as we go along what you must do. If you are ready, let us go."

"Well," cried the officers, who were waiting for Christian in the porch, "shall we have good luck?"

"So far as I am concerned," said Christian, "it seems that I am invulnerable; "but the bear, I am afraid, will have quite as good luck as I. The seer said that he would run away toward the east."

"No, no," rejoined the *danneman*, whose serious and trustful air imposed silence on any inclination to jest; "she said that the devourer would rush toward the east, but not that he would not be killed. Let us go!"

Before following Christian to the hunt, we will return for a few moments to the castle of Waldemora, whence the baron had started with all his able-bodied guests and two or three hundred beaters immediately after sunrise.

The objective point of the ceremonial *battue* was much lower than the *danneman's* cottage. So that the ladies were able to attend, some determined to watch the hunt at as close quarters as possible; others, less intrepid, mentally resolving to venture no farther than the edge of the wood. Among the first was Olga, who was desirous to show the baron that she was interested in his prowess. Among the latter were Margaret, who cared but little for the baron's prowess, and Martina Akerstrom, the daughter of the minister of the parish and Lieutenant Osburn's fiancée: a most excellent young woman, a little too high-colored, but affable, affectionate and sincere, with whom Margaret had formed an intimacy in preference to all the rest. Let us say in passing, that the minister Mickelson, mentioned in Baroness Hilda's story, had died long before, having rashly fallen out, it was said, with Baron Olaüs. His successor was a most estimable man, and, although his living was

cate and his little servant. I don't mention Ulf, the brute. Christian Waldo has disappeared unless he is sick and in bed. The advocate, who shares his room with him, refuses to admit anybody, and I begin to have my suspicions of him.

"*Ten o'clock.*—The *captain* sends to ask me if it is time to act. Not yet. The Italian still has too much strength. Christian Waldo certainly has gone out. I went into the famous bear-chamber and found the advocate working there. He said he did not know where the marionette man had gone. I saw the fellow's luggage. He isn't far away.

"*Eleven o'clock.*—I have disinterred Christian Waldo's servant in the stables of the new castle. I have made him talk. He knows his master's real name, *Dulac:* so he must be a Frenchman, not an Italian. Another more interesting discovery due to this *Puffo,* is that we have two Waldos here instead of one. Puffo did not work the marionettes last night, and the Waldo I talked with—the man with the wine-colored birthmark—told me a dozen lies. Puffo doesn't know who assisted him in the performance. This Puffo was drunk last night and asleep. He can't imagine, he says, who can have taken his place. I was tempted to send him to the captain, but I think he is telling the truth. I am keeping him in sight. He may be useful to me.

"This second Waldo must be the false Gœfle. So, if we act as if we had no suspicions, we shall have them both to-night. I thought I could see that Stenson was disturbed. I gave orders to let him alone. We must set his mind at rest, whatever happens, and not let him escape us.

"*Noon.*—I have everything; the sealed proofs, which I send you, and the Italian's revelations which are also

XIII

While this missive is hastening after the baron, we may seize the opportunity to hasten back to Bœtsoi's chalet, whence that worthy man proposed to guide Christian to the hunt with no other weapons than a rope and a stake with a sharp iron head.

"Wait!" said the major, "our friend must be properly fitted out and armed. Your stake is all very well, Master Joë; but a good Norwegian cutlass will do better service, and a good rifle will not come amiss."

Yielding to the representations of the major and the lieutenant, Christian donned a reindeer-skin jacket and a pair of soleless, seamless felt boots—a style of footwear as soft and yielding as a stocking, never slipping on the ice or snow, and impervious to cold. Then, having armed him and supplied him with powder and ball, Christian's friends placed a fur cap on his head and proceeded to draw lots for places in the line.

"I have number one!" cried the major, joyously; "so I am the one to give up my place to Christian and station myself a hundred paces behind him; the lieutenant will be at my left, the corporal at my right, each a hundred paces away. So off with you and count your paces; we will follow when you have counted a hundred and motion to us."

Everything being thus arranged, Christian and the *danneman* opened the procession and the others followed, carefully observing the distances agreed upon. Chris-

tian was surprised to find this strict order of battle adopted at the outset.

"Is the bear so near," he asked his guide, "that we shall not have plenty of time to take up our positions when we approach his den?"

"The *evil beast* is very near," replied the *danneman*. "One never went into winter quarters so near my house before. I had so little idea that he was there, that I have been almost over his hole ten times without a suspicion that I had such a handsome neighbor."

"So our bear is handsome, is he?"

"He is one of the largest I ever saw; but we must begin to talk low; he has very sharp ears, and within a quarter of an hour we shall be where he will not lose one of our words."

"Weren't your daughters frightened to have him so near?" said Christian, drawing near to the *danneman* and lowering his voice solely to please him, for his fears seemed to him exaggerated.

At that question Joë Bœtsoï squared his great head on his broad shoulders and cast a suspicious glance at his companion.

"*Herr* Christian, my girls are good girls," he said shortly.

"Have I shown any signs of doubting it, *Herr* Bœtsoï?" queried Christian, in amazement.

"Don't you know," rejoined the *danneman*, making an effort to utter a word which was very distasteful to him, "that the *bear* cannot harm a virgin, so that a virtuous girl can go and snatch her goat or her lamb out of his clutches without fear?"

"Forgive me, Master *danneman*, I did not know it; I am a stranger here, and I see that one can learn something new every day. But are you very sure that the

bear has such great respect for chastity? Would you have brought one of your daughters with you on this expedition?"

"No! women cannot keep their tongues still; they give the quarry warning by their cackle. That is why you must never take girls or women hunting."

"And suppose you should happen to see the bear chasing your daughters, would you not be alarmed? would you not fire at him?"

"I should fire at him to get his skin, but I should not be alarmed about my daughters. I tell you again that I am sure of their virtuous conduct."

"But your sister the sibyl—she has been married, I suppose?"

"Married?" echoed the *danneman*, shaking his head. "Married or not," he continued with a sigh, "Karina isn't afraid of evil tongues."

"Do evil tongues come as far as this to annoy you, Master Joë? I should have thought that in this desert——"

The *danneman* shrugged his shoulders and did not reply, but his face assumed a displeased expression.

"Have I unconsciously offended you again?" Christian asked a few seconds later.

"Yes," replied the *danneman*, "and as it is not well for us to go together to the place where we are going, with anything on our minds, I want to know why you asked me if Karina was afraid of the bear. I will not go a step farther until I know whether you had any evil thought of her or of me."

In face of this appeal to his candor, made with the stately grandeur of ancient times, Christian was embarrassed for a reply. When he questioned Bœtsoï concerning Karina, he had yielded to an impulse of curiosity due

I was very young then—when I proposed to put a bullet through the head of a man whom Karina talked about too much in her dreams; but Karina swore to our mother and to me that she hated that man. She swore on the Bible and we were bound to believe it. The child was suckled among the mountains by a tame deer, which followed Karina like a goat. She lived more than a year alone with him in another house of ours much higher up than the one you were in just now. When the child was weaned, we took him into our house, and we loved him. He grew and talked and was a handsome boy; but one day he went away as he came, and Karina wept so bitterly that her mind flew away after him. There is much mystery about it. Isn't it well known that there are women who bring children into the world by the word simply, just as they have conceived them by breathing too freely the air of the lake which the trolls disturb at night? Karina had lived too long down yonder, and everybody knows that the lake of Waldemora is an evil place. But enough of that. It is God's secret and the secret of the lake. You must not think ill of Karina. She doesn't work, she does nothing about the house which is of any consequence or which you can see; but she is one of those who bring a family good luck by their learning and singing. She sees what other people don't see, and what she predicts always happens in one way or another. We have talked enough, I tell you, for here we are at the thicket and we must think of nothing now but the evil beast. Listen carefully to what I say, and then not a word, not a single word, even if your life is in danger——"

"Even if my life is in danger," replied Christian, deeply moved by the *danneman's* mysterious narrative, "you must tell me about this child who was brought up

not to hurt him; it isn't lying to lie to a wild beast. So I advise you to say something soothing to him; he has sense enough to understand that you are flattering him, but not enough to realize that you are deceiving him. Wait a moment now until I see if the other gentlemen are taking the right direction to surround his den; for if he should escape us, he mustn't escape the others. I will come back in five minutes."

Christian was left alone in a strange place. Since they left the châlet, he had walked with his guide about half a league through the heart of a superb forest which lay in dense broad waves along the back and sides of the mountain. The profusion of fine trees in that region and the difficulty of transporting them are responsible for the contemptuous, one might say even impious prodigality with which those noble children of the desert are sacrificed. To make the smallest tool, the most trivial toy—the Dalecarlian shepherds, like their Swiss fellows, are very skilful in carving and whittling resinous wood—a colossus of verdure is felled without a thought, and often, to spare themselves the trouble of felling them, they set fire to them at the foot: if the fire spreads and consumes whole forests, so much the worse! In many places whole battalions of black monsters rise above the snow-fields, or, in summer, above vast tracts of ashes. They are charred trunks, which no longer furnish shelter to any animal; and the silence and immobility of death reign among them.* They who hunt in Russia are distressed to find the same recklessness and the same profanation of nature in the magnificent forests of the far North.

The spot where Christian was had been neither burned

* Only very recently has the State, too late, perhaps, undertaken to put a stop to this devastation in Sweden.

snow, the brief and stealthy flight of a small bird, causes a sort of thrill. That emotion almost becomes terror when it is caused by a stag or a doe whose noisy flight suddenly awakens the sleeping echoes of the solitude.

And yet Christian at that moment was thinking no more of the grand spectacle before him than of preparing to fight the *evil beast*. A sorrowful and terrible thought had passed through his mind. The *danneman's* strange narrative, very obscure at first because of his awkward language and his superstitious ideas, had become clear and distinct in his mind. That rustic sibyl, who had been seduced by the *troll* of the lake, that mysterious child reared in the *danneman's* chalet, who had disappeared at the age of three or four, the strange hallucinations of memory which Christian himself had experienced during the breakfast, and which were perhaps nothing else than suddenly awakened reminiscences——

"Yes," he said, "now the memory, or the illusion, is coming back again. The three lost cows twenty years ago, the rifle shot that stopped the fourth—It seems to me that I hear that fatal shot, it seems to me that I see the poor beast fall, and that I feel again the sensation of sorrow and regret which I felt then; it is likely that that was the first emotion of my life, the emotion that stirs sentiment to life within us. Great God! it seems to me that a whole forgotten world comes to life again and rises before me! It seems to me that it happened yonder, around the corner of that cliff, on the edge of that reddish-hued perpendicular bank. It seems to me that I was there! Was it I, or was it my soul in some previous existence? But if it was I, then who is my father? Who was that man whom the *danneman* wished to kill before suspicion was lulled to sleep by superstition? Why did the sybil—my mother, perhaps!—

shiver just now when she touched my fingers? She was lost in a sort of dream, she did not look at my face, but she said that I was the baron! And a moment ago, when I asked the *danneman* if the child had not something peculiar about his hands, did not his wrath and his distress prove that he had noticed and understood that hereditary sign, more noticeable in the child, it may be, than it now is in the man?

"And yet, even if he did notice it on me to-day, his mind was very far from connecting me with the past. It did not even occur to him to try to recognize me. He saw in me only an inquisitive and quizzical foreigner who was trying to find out the secret of his family, and that secret is his shame; he prefers to twist it into a legend, a fairy tale. He is offended if one doubts the truth of the marvellous facts he relates; he is angry if it is suggested that the child had fingers like Baron Olaüs's. Nothing is offensive but the truth, it is said: so that I guessed—Can it be that poor Karina was frightened because she took me for her seducer?

"Her seducer! who knows? perhaps that man, whom everybody hates and despises, put violence upon her. She may have concealed her misfortune, made the most of the popular belief in the spirits of perdition, to prevent her young brother the *danneman* from taking the risk of trying to wreak vengeance on a too powerful enemy. Poor woman! Yes, she surely hates him, fears him still; she has become a seer, that is to say mad, since her catastrophe; she must have had a sort of education, for she knows by heart all the old poetry of her country, and when she becomes excited she finds strains of menace and of hatred in her confused memory of those tragic chants. In a word, whether it be a deceptive vision or a logical deduction, it seems to me that I see in this the fin-

ger of God leading me back to the hovel from which I was taken away.—Why, and by whom? Can it have been the *danneman*, a fearless traveller, who carried me far away to deliver his sister from the presence of a living remorse or his family from a burning shame? Or should I attribute it rather to the jealousy of Olaüs's wife, according to the common hypothesis reported to me by the major?"

These thoughts chased one another through Christian's brain, and his heart was torn with dread and sorrow. The idea that he might be Baron Olaüs's son simply redoubled his distress. If that were the case, he could look upon him in no other light than as an enemy of his mother's honor and tranquillity.

"Who can say," he said to himself, "that it was not he who had me kidnapped in order to avoid carrying out some promise, some obligation he had undertaken toward his victim? Ah! if that were so, I would remain in this province. I would not attempt to force him to acknowledge me, but I would enter the *danneman's* service; by my labor and my zeal, I certainly would win his esteem and perhaps the love of this family which is my own, and perhaps I could succeed in restoring, if not reason, at all events peace of mind to this unhappy seer, as I succeeded long ago in bringing peace to my dear Sofia Goffredi's dreams. What a strange destiny is mine, condemned to have two mothers crazed by despair! Ah! well, this undeserved destiny is a path marked out for me by duty, to guide me to some unknown reward. I accept it. Karina Bœtsoï does not remember that she once lost a child, but she shall receive a son's fostering care and protection."

At that moment Christian thought that he heard some one calling him. He looked in front of him and on all

sides, but saw nobody. The *danneman* had told him to wait, and that he would return. Christian hesitated; but a moment later a cry of distress caused him to spring to his feet, seize his weapons, and hurry in the direction of the voice.

Scaling with marvellous ability the overturned trees, the heaps of débris, hardened by the ice, and the monstrous intertwined roots, Christian arrived unawares within twenty paces of the bear's den. The formidable beast was crouching between him and the den; he was licking the blood which tinged the snow about his sides. The *danneman* stood in the mouth of the cave, pale as death, his hair dishevelled and standing erect on his head, his hands empty. His stake, broken in the bear's side, lay beside the beast; and, instead of taking his gun from behind his shoulder to finish him, Bœtsoï seemed fascinated, rooted to the spot by overpowering fear, or by some plan of action impossible to conceive.

As soon as he saw Christian, he made signs to him which he could not understand; but he guessed that he must not speak, so he aimed at the bear. Luckily, before firing, he looked again at Joë Bœtsoï, who motioned desperately to him to stop. Christian imitated him by asking in pantomime if he must cut the beast's throat without making a noise; and on receiving an affirmative reply, he walked straight toward the bear, which stood erect, growling fiercely, to receive him.

"Quick! quick! or we are lost!" cried the *danneman*, who had taken his gun and seemed to be watching something inside the den, invisible to Christian.

Christian did not wait to be told twice. Offering his rope-wound arm to the somewhat weakened grasp of the wounded bear, he speedily ripped him open, but forgot that the beast might fall forward, and that he must jump

quickly to get out of the way. Luckily the bear fell sidewise, and, although dragging Christian with him in his fall, did not succeed in grasping anything more than the skirts of his coat in his terrible claws, clenched in the last convulsive struggle of life. Being thus buried in the snow, and as it were nailed by the animal's weight and the grip of his claws on his clothing, Christian had some difficulty in setting himself free, and left behind a considerable portion of the reindeer skin jacket which the major had lent him. But he paid little heed to that; the *danneman* was engaged with other foes. He had just fired at random into the dark cave, and another dark bear, young but of considerable size, came rushing toward him with a threatening air, while two whelps, of the size of large puppies, ran between his legs, with no purpose save flight, but in a way that sadly endangered his equilibrium. The *danneman*, resolved to die rather than allow his threefold prey to escape, had braced himself against the tree trunks which formed an entrance to the cave in the shape of a natural ogive doorway. He was fighting with the young bear, whom he had wounded when he fired into the cave; but, being thrown off his balance in spite of his efforts, by the whelps, he had fallen, and the wounded bear was rushing savagely upon him, when Christian, sure of his aim and his nerve, put a bullet through the creature's head when it was only about a foot above the man's.

"Well done!" said the *danneman*, springing nimbly to his feet.

But the whelps had passed over his body, and he had no idea of letting them escape.

"Wait, wait!" said Christian, looking after the two fugitives; "see what they are doing!"

creature was a mother; didn't I say that she was dappled? Oh! I saw her plain enough, but I hadn't had a chance to see the little ones very well; and, as for the *friend*, I hadn't seen him at all. I have heard that the mother often takes into winter quarters with her a young beast who isn't the father of her cubs, to defend them and look out for them in case she is killed. I didn't quite believe it, as I had never seen it. Now I see it, and I shall believe it after this. If I had believed it, I'd have brought two of you, so that each could have had a good shot; but who could have expected such a thing? As I didn't expect to fire, I only brought my gun as a matter of precaution, in case the *herr* I had in charge should miss his aim and get into a dangerous place. As for the iron-pointed stake, I thought so little of using it, that I didn't even look to see if the one I brought was in good condition. Well, this is what happened," continued the *danneman*, addressing Christian. "I told you that I would come back for you, after stationing the others; and, when I had done that, I started, I thought, straight back to you; but it must have been that some beast disturbed my last night's marks, for, although I didn't exactly go astray, I passed close to the den, and didn't realize it until it was too late to turn back. The beast heard me; she came at me because she had cubs. I tried to frighten her with my arms, and drive her back into the den; she refused to be frightened and reared at me. I slit her open—I had to do it—and at the same time I called twice. At the sound of my voice, the *friend* showed himself in the doorway of the house, and, to prevent his running away, I ran and stood in front of it, forgetting that my broken stake lay on the ground beside the mother. I thought that she was dead, but, when I left her, she stood up, lay down and stood up

again. Then the time seemed very long before I saw you coming, *Herr* Christian, for I had the mother on one side, who might at any minute recover strength enough to attack me, and, on the other, the *friend,* who had retreated to the farther end of the hole, and was waiting to be reinforced by her before picking a quarrel with me, to say nothing of the two little ones, whom I was sure of having about my legs when the battle was on. To face all of them I had just one gun, and that was not enough. I didn't dare take aim, for the beasts make up their minds quicker at sight of a pointed gun. I was afraid, I can confess it without shame, as I did not retreat, and we have all four bodies in our hands. I waited what seemed to me like a year, and yet I imagine that you came very fast, *Herr* Christian, as everything turned out so well—yes, as well as possible, I may say, and you are a man! I am sorry that we had two or three bitter words before. That's all forgotten, and I owe you my heart as I owe you my life. Let us embrace, and consider that I embrace you as if you were my son."

Christian embraced the Dalecarlian with the greatest warmth, and the latter went on to tell the others how, after speedily finishing the she-bear hand to hand, the young man had shot the *friend* most opportunely, *within two inches of his Christian face.* Christian tried to defend his modesty from the *danneman's* exaggeration as to this last point; but as Bœtsoï in his enthusiasm would not modify his statements, and as there was no way of proving which was right, the young adventurer's exploit assumed gigantic proportions in the imagination of Larrson and his friends. Their esteem for him increased in proportion, and it is not to be wondered at. Presence of mind is the attribute of true courage. The man who

succumbs is pitied, the man who succeeds is admired. While he did not consent to extol himself, Christian did feel a keen satisfaction in having established a claim to the friendship of the *danneman,* whom he persisted thenceforth in regarding as his near kinsman; but he was very careful not to recur to his imprudent questions, and resolved to seek the truth elsewhere, even though he had to waste much time and expend much patience in the quest.

The two dead bears, especially the female, were quite heavy, weighing more than four hundred pounds between them. To drag them over the ground, where it was difficult for them to take care of themselves, seemed impossible. Horses even would have been unequal to the task. As the daylight would soon begin to fade, and as they wished to join the baron's hunting party, they had a superabundance of riches on their hands. Even the cubs, as they refused to walk, were a source of great embarrassment.

"Do you go your way," said the *danneman;* "my children and I will soon cut down two or three young trees and make a hurdle on which we will load the whole family and draw them to my house. From there I will send you the booty in my sleigh, and it will all be at your *bostælle* in two hours, so that you can show the result of your hunt to all your friends."

"And we will send the dead beasts back to you tomorrow," said Larrson; "for there is no one else whom we will trust to skin them and prepare the pelts. Don't you say so, Christian?"

"I have no other opinion than yours," Christian replied.

"I beg your pardon," rejoined the major; "we bought a bear of the *danneman;* that was the one you killed;

it belongs to you, just as the one he shot belongs to him, unless he chooses to sell him to us."

"He killed them both," said Christian; "I simply finished them; I have no claim to anything."

Thereupon ensued a contest of delicacy wherein the *danneman* displayed a no less scrupulous sense of honor than the others. At last Christian had to give way and accept the female bear for his share. The two cubs were bought of the *danneman* as one bear, and he was forced to accept the old lady bear's *friend* as his own. Everything being thus arranged, the major and his friends sought to take Christian away; but he refused to go with them.

"I have no business at the baron's hunting party, which, you yourself told me, is an uninteresting affair after this," he said. "Besides I have no time to go there. I must return to the Stollborg at the earliest possible moment, in order to arrange for my performance this evening. Remember that I am bound by contract to the trade of *fabulist* for two more days. I will stay here and help the *danneman* carry away the *evil beasts;* then I will avail myself of his sleigh to go down to the lake. Don't forget that you promised Mr. Gœfle and myself to come and see us at the Stollborg."

"We will come after supper and the performance," replied the major. "Rely on us."

"And I," said the *danneman* to Christian, "will agree that you shall be at the lake before dark."

There was not much time to lose. The officers went back to their sleighs, and the *danneman*, assisted by Christian, his son Olof and his older daughter, who had joined them, proceeded with great skill and rapidity to make his hand-sledge. When the game was loaded, they

speedily drew it to the chalet, some pulling, the rest pushing or holding back.

As soon as they arrived, Christian looked about for the seer. The bed curtain was drawn and perfectly still. Was she still behind it? He would have liked to see the mysterious woman again and to try to speak to her; but he dared not go near her bed. It seemed to him that the *danneman* kept his eyes fixed on him, and that any indication of curiosity would have displeased him.

The younger of the *danneman's* daughters brought some brandy made in the house, that famous brandy made of grain, of which Gustavus III. afterward made a State monopoly, thus creating an onerous and annoying tax which caused the loss of all his popularity and which, in fact, plunged anew in poverty that people whom he had delivered from the tyranny of the nobles. Is the frequent use of brandy a necessity in that severe climate? Christian was the less inclined to think so because that beverage, distilled by the *danneman* in person, literally scorched the windpipe. The excellent man urged his guest to partake freely of it, unable to understand how, after killing two bears, he could fail to feel disposed to get a little tipsy. Christian could not carry courtesy so far, and although he wished that his head were strong enough to drink Bœtsoï tipsy without losing his own wits—whereby he might perhaps have discovered on the spot the secret of his birth—he confined himself to the tea left for him by the major, and served steaming hot in a wooden cup beautifully shaped and carved by young Olof.

The young man felt a little humiliated to have enjoyed the royal sport of killing a bear at the expense of his friends; for, after all, that bear belonged to the *danne-*

man, as all game unquestionably belongs to him who discovers it on his land. They had made Christian a present of his booty, that is to say, they had paid for it for him. He was pleased to learn from the *danneman* that the payment had not yet been made, as the major and his friends had not foreseen that the spoils would be so abundant, and had not brought the necessary money. Christian inquired the price.

"That depends," said the *danneman* proudly; "if they leave me the animal, as they do sometimes, why, I simply owe my thanks to the one who helped me bring it down. But of course, *Herr* Christian, you want to keep the skin and paws and the fat and the hams?"

"I want nothing at all," replied Christian, with a laugh. "Great heaven! what should I do with them? I beg you to keep everything, *Herr* Bœtsoï, and, as I presume that you are entitled to charge a little more to those who enjoy the pleasure of hunting on your land than to those who simply buy a skin of you, I beg you to accept thirty dollars which I have about me—and which is all that I possess," he added mentally.

"Thirty dollars!" cried the *danneman*, "that's a good deal; are you a rich man?"

"I am rich enough to beg you to accept that amount."

The *danneman* took the money and looked at it; then he looked at Christian's hands, but noticed nothing except their whiteness.

"Your gold is good," he said, "and your hand is white. You are not a working man, and yet you eat *kakebroe* like a Dalecarlian. Your face is of the province, and your language is not. The clothes you wore when you came here are no better than mine. What I can plainly see is that you are proud, that you don't

want your friends, who gave you the pleasure of killing the evil beast, to spend their money for you too."

"Exactly, *Herr* Bœtsoï, you have hit it."

"Never fear. Joë Bœtsoï is an honest man. He won't take anything from your friends, since you leave your game with him. As for taking pay from you, that depends. Can you swear to me on your honor, that you are a rich young man, a young man of family?"

"What does it matter?"

"No, no," continued the *danneman;* "you saved my life, and I don't thank you for it, because it's no more than I would have done for you; but you're a fine shot, and what's more, you're a man who knows how to listen to what another man tells him. When I motioned to you up yonder, if you hadn't chosen to do what I wanted, we should both have been in a bad fix, I especially, without my stake and with the rope loose on my arm. I am pleased with you, and I would like my son to have a face and a temper like yours, for you're a bold fellow and gentle too. So if you are not rich, don't make believe rich with me. What's the use? I am not in want! I lack nothing that I need, and if you should lack anything you could apply to Joë Bœtsoï, who wouldn't be hard put to find thirty dollars, or even a hundred, to help a friend."

"I am perfectly sure of it, friend Bœtsoï," replied Christian, "and I should come to you with confidence, not to ask for a hundred dollars or thirty, but to ask you for work, if I wanted work. It may be that that will never happen, but if it should, I should take much more pleasure in applying to you if I had paid you what is fairly due you and what a rich man would pay you. I did not come here as a poor man, you owe me nothing."

"I want no money," said the *danneman;* "take it

"What do you say? Nothing?"

"Bread and a roof to cover me, aren't those enough?"

"*Herr* Christian," said the *danneman* with a frown, "are you a lazy fellow or a good-for-nothing, that you have no thought for the future?"

Christian saw that he had aroused suspicion by overdoing his disinterestedness.

"Do you know Mr. Gœfle?" he inquired.

"The lawyer? Yes, very well; I sold him his horse, a good horse that, and a good man the lawyer is!"

"Well, he will answer for me. Will that give you confidence?"

"Yes, it's a bargain. Take back your money."

"Suppose I should ask you to keep it for me?"

"Why, is it stolen money?" cried the *danneman,* his suspicions aroused once more.

Christian began to laugh, inwardly confessing that he was a very bungling diplomatist.

"Believe me," he said to the *danneman,* "I am a simple and straightforward man. I am not accustomed to be believed on my word alone, although my face impresses everybody pleasantly. If you don't take my thirty dollars to-day, the major will insist on paying you to-morrow, and that is what I don't want."

"The major won't give me anything because I won't accept anything from him," rejoined the *danneman* warmly. "It seems that you doubt my word now."

Christian had to abandon the idea of leaving his slender fortune in that house, which perhaps afforded shelter to his mother. The discussion might have degenerated into a quarrel, as the *danneman* watered the ingenuous pride that was his birthright as a free peasant with copious draughts of brandy. But the sleigh was ready and it was time to go. Not for anything in the world would

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The *danneman's* sleigh, which was heavier than that in which the major had driven Christian to the chalet, was luckily more stoutly built as well, for the young Dalecarlian scorned to turn aside either for bowlder or hole. Instead of leaving the horse, which was more intelligent than he, at liberty to follow his own instinct, he beat him and forced him to take the opposite direction so persistently that he made their journey unnecessarily perilous. Christian, lying among the four bears, two dead and two living, said to himself that he was sure to fall softly unless they were thrown out on one side and he on the other. Irritated at last to see the *danneman's* horse so maltreated without benefit to anyone, he unceremoniously seized the reins and the whip, saying to the boy that he desired to drive for his own amusement, but saying it in a tone which admitted of no reply.

Olof was a good-hearted fellow enough; he played the terrible only from pride, in order to pose as a man. He began to sing in Swedish, partly to relieve the tedium of the journey, partly to show his companion that he could pronounce the mother tongue more purely than the other members of his family. This circumstance induced Christian to lead him on to talk.

"Why didn't you come with us when we went after the bear?" he asked him. "Have you ever seen a bear on his feet?"

"Aunt will never let me go," said the boy with a sigh.

surprised, when we go to her bed in the morning, not to find her there, nor in the house, nor on the mountain, nor in any place we can think of."

"Where do you suppose she goes when she disappears like that?"

"Wicked people say she goes to Blaakulla; but we mustn't believe them!"

"Where is Blaakulla? Where the witches meet?"

"Yes, the black mountain where those wicked women carry the children they steal while they're asleep, and then take them to Satan on the horse *Skjulls*, which is just like a flying cow. Then Satan takes them and marks them by biting them on the forehead or the little fingers, and they keep the mark all their lives. But I know why they say that about my Aunt Karina."

"Why is it, pray?"

"Because a long time ago, before I was born, it seems she brought a little child to the house whose fingers were bitten by the devil, and my father wouldn't look at him; but afterward my father got to love him, and he says my aunt's a good Christian woman, and that all the things people say about her are lies. The minister of the parish doesn't see anything bad in her, and says that, since she wants to run about while she's asleep we must let her do it. Besides, she said herself that she should die, and that great misfortunes would happen if she should be shut up. That's why she goes where she pleases, and my father says it's better not to know where she goes, because she has secrets which wouldn't be of any use if we followed her and watched her."

"But has nothing ever happened to her when she was travelling about the country sound asleep?"

"No, never; and perhaps she isn't asleep; how can anyone tell? But this is what I do know, that some-

horses, who had taken fright at a distance at the odor of the bears. They had left the mountain behind and were on the narrow road leading down to the lake. Christian, realizing that there would be a collision if he did not draw aside, and seeing no way of doing so without coming to grief himself over the bank that sloped down to the stream, lashed the *danneman's* horse in order to keep the lead, and thus reached a place where it was possible to make room; but, just as he was on the point of turning to the right, the sleigh in the rear, drawn by fiery horses and driven by a brutal coachman, brushed him so close that both sleighs were overturned at the same instant.

Christian found himself on the ground with Olof and his four bears, and so buried in the snow piled up at the side of the road, that it took him several moments to find out where and with whom he was thus buried. The first voice that struck his ear, the first face that rejoiced his eyes, were the voice and face of the illustrious Professor Stangstadius. The learned man was not at all injured; but he was in a furious rage, and turning at a venture upon Christian, who was not masked and with whom he found himself face to face, he overwhelmed him with insults and threatened him with the wrath of heaven and the maledictions of the whole world.

"La, la! gently!" replied Christian, helping him to stand on his unequal legs; "there are no bones broken, my dear professor, thank God! I call heaven and earth to witness the pleasure I feel; but if it was you who were driving so recklessly, why, I must say that you show little consideration for those who haven't as good horses as yours. Come, come, hands off!" he added, pushing away the geologist, who seemed disposed to take him by the collar, "or the next time I meet you

"Why, bless my soul!" he said, upon looking at the baron and feeling his pulse, "this is very simple: faint pulse, purple face, swollen lips, a rattle in the throat—and no external lesion. It is as clear as daylight—an attack of apoplexy. He must be bled, at once, and freely."

The young doctor looked for his case of instruments but could not find it. Christian and Olof assisted him in his search, but were no more fortunate. The baron's sleigh with its frantic horses was a long way off; the coachman, thinking that his master would have him beaten to death for his unskilfulness, was running after his team, crazed with excitement, and filling the desert with his imprecations.

As the *danneman's* docile horse had stopped short, it was suggested that the sick man should be placed in the peasant's sleigh and transported to the castle as quickly as possible. Stangstadius declared that he would be dead on his arrival. The doctor, fairly beside himself, insisted on running after the baron's sleigh in search of his instrument case. At last he found it in his pocket, where, in his confusion, he had put his hand on it ten times without feeling it, but when the time came to open the vein his hand trembled so that Stangstadius, who was utterly callous to anything unconnected with himself, and, moreover, well pleased to have an opportunity to demonstrate his superiority in every direction, had to take the lancet and do the blood-letting.

Christian, quivering with intense inward excitement, stood by and watched that strange and ghastly picture, lighted by the livid rays of the setting sun: that man with the powerful frame and terror-inspiring face, writhing convulsively on that heap of savage beasts; that stout white arm from which a stream of black blood flowed

"You are very hard on us young men, professor," rejoined the physician, with increasing irritation. "A man may well lack presence of mind when he has just been thrown ten feet, and has hardly picked himself up when he is called upon to diagnose a desperate case at a glance."

"A terrible thing, a fall in the snow!" retorted Stangstadius, shrugging that one of his shoulders which was capable of that movement. "If you had fallen like me to the bottom of the shaft of a mine! A fall of fifty feet, seven inches and five lines, unconscious for six hours fifty-three——"

"Damnation! professor, we have now to deal with my patient's unconsciousness, not with yours. What is past is past. Be kind enough to hold his arm while I find a bandage."

"No; you see there are people who complain about everything," continued Stangstadius, striding back and forth without listening to his confrère.

Then, forgetting that he had just been in a terrible rage with Christian, the goodman, who was hot-tempered but bore no malice, turned to him and added, jocosely:

"Did I so much as turn pale just now when I found myself under these four beasts—to say nothing of the other two, you and your companion? A most extraordinary pair of bunglers. But after all what do a few bruises more or less amount to? I never once thought of myself! I was ready on the instant to make a diagnosis of the patient's condition and to bleed him. A swift, sure glance, and a steady hand! By the way, where in the devil have I seen you?" he continued, still addressing Christian and giving no further thought to the sick man. "Did you kill all these creatures? That's a fine bag—a she-bear of the largest species, brown with blue

cally obeying Stangstadius; "aren't you afraid that the cold will cause death under such circumstances?"

"Bah! the cold!" rejoined Stangstadius; "I don't care a fig for the cold of the atmosphere. The cold of death is much worse. Let him bleed, I tell you, and then let him rest. You must do what is prescribed, no matter what may happen.—The big baron is in a bad way, you see," he added, turning to Christian; "I wouldn't like to be in his skin just now. By the way, where in the devil have I seen you?"

Then he stooped to pick up something from the snow and the current of his thoughts changed.

"What is this red stone?" he said. "A piece of porphyry? In a region of gneiss and basalt? Did you bring it from up yonder?" he added, pointing to the mountains in the west. "It was in your pocket? Ah, you see it's not easy to deceive me! I can tell every species of rock by its shape, yes, two leagues away!"

The baron's sleigh returned finally, and a few moments later, as his condition seemed improved once more, they were able to arrest the flow of blood and place the invalid in his vehicle, which returned at a footpace to the castle, while Christian pursued his journey with the *danneman's* son.

"Well," said the boy, when they had passed the funereal equipage, "what was I saying to you when this thing happened? What was it that Aunt Karina said?"

"I didn't understand the ballad very well," replied Christian, lost in thought. "It did not seem to me very cheerful."

"'He leaves his soul at the house,' repeated Olof, 'and when he goes back to get it, he will not find it.'—Isn't that plain enough, *Herr* Christian? The *jarl* was sick. He tried to get rid of his sickness; but his soul

the cause of his condition; the doctors said that it had been impending twenty-four hours!"

"And Aunt Karina said so, too!" added Olof. "So don't be afraid, he won't recover from it."

Thereupon Olof began once more to hum between his teeth the dismal refrain which reminded Christian more and more strongly of the monotonous tune he had heard the day before among the bowlders by the lake.

"Doesn't Aunt Karina go to the Stollborg sometimes?" he asked Olof.

"To the Stollborg? I wouldn't believe it unless I saw her there."

"Why so?"

"Because she doesn't like that place; she doesn't even want anybody to mention it before her."

"What is the reason?"

"Who can find out? She used to live there long ago, in Baroness Hilda's time; but I can't tell you any more about it, because I only know what I have told you; neither the Stollborg nor Waldemora is ever mentioned in our house!"

Christian felt that there would be a certain indelicacy in questioning the young *danneman* concerning his aunt's possible relations with the baron. Moreover his thoughts were fast becoming so sad and gloomy that he had not the courage to try to learn anything more for the moment.

The sudden change in the atmosphere contributed not a little to his gloom. The sun, whether it had set or not, had entirely disappeared in one of those dense mists which sometimes suddenly envelop it as it sinks toward the horizon on a winter's day. It was a heavy, dark, leaden pall, which grew denser every moment, and soon left nothing visible except the bottom of the valley into

The baron's son! those three words seemed written in black letters on his brain, and to have killed all hope of the future, all love of life. It was not despair, it was an intense loathing for everything, and in that frame of mind he was conscious of but one fact, that he was overwhelmed with drowsiness, and that he would be overjoyed to slide quietly into the lake and fall asleep forever. He was actually so nearly asleep that he did not know where he was, when a voice as faint as the twilight, as veiled as the sky and the lake, began to sing close beside him words to which he listened closely and which he gradually understood.

"Behold the sun is rising, clear and fair, over the flower-studded plain. I see snow-white fairies crowned, with willow twigs and lilacs, dancing on the dew-spangled grass. The child is among them, the child of the lake, lovelier than the morning.

"Behold the sun is in the zenith. The birds are silent, the insects buzz in clouds of golden dust. The fairies have repaired to a clump of azaleas, seeking a cool breeze beside the stream. The child slumbers on their knees, the child of the lake, lovelier than the noonday.

"Behold the sun is setting. The nightingale sings to the diamond-bright star which gleams in the lake. The fairies sit at the foot of the staircase of pink crystal leading up to heaven; they sing to lull to sleep the child who smiles in its downy nest, the child of the lake, lovelier than the evening star!"

Again did Christian hear the voice of the bowlders, but softer than before, and this time singing coherent words to a pleasant and melodious air. This was a modern song which the sibyl had been able to learn and understand. To no purpose, however, did Christian try to discover a human figure. He could not even see the

horse which drew the sleigh, or rather, which had ceased to draw it, for the sleigh was standing still and Olof was no longer there. Christian was so far from being anxious concerning his plight, that he listened attentively to the last measure of the three stanzas. It seemed to him that the first was sung a few steps behind him, the second nearer, and the third somewhat more distant in the opposite direction, dying away gradually toward the lake.

The young man almost leaped from the sleigh to seize the invisible singer as she passed; but when he was on the point of stepping to the ground, he found nothing but empty space, and as the instinct of self-preservation returned to him with the sweet words of the ballad, he put out his hands to find out where he was. He felt the horse's damp flanks, and called Olof in a low voice several times, but received no answer. Then, as it seemed to him that the singer was receding, he called her too, giving her the name of *Vala Karina;* but she did not hear him or else would not reply. Thereupon he decided to alight from the sleigh on the opposite side from that on which he had made his first trial, and found himself on the steep road, which he explored for some twenty yards, still calling Olof with keen anxiety. Had the child tumbled over the precipice during Christian's brief nap? At last he spied in the distance an almost imperceptible luminous point coming toward him, and he soon recognized Olof with a lighted lantern in his hand.

"Is that you, *Herr* Christian?" exclaimed the terrified child, as he came suddenly face to face with him before he had heard his footsteps. "You left the sleigh when you couldn't see where you were going, and you did very wrong; this is a very dangerous place, and I told you not to stir while I went and lighted my lantern at the mill down yonder. Didn't you hear me?"

"Not a word; but didn't you hear somebody singing?"

"Yes, but I wouldn't listen. You often hear voices on the shore of the lake, and it's a hard thing to understand what they sing, for if you do they lead you to places from which you never come back."

"Well, I listened," said Christian, "and I recognized your Aunt Karina's voice. She must be close by. Let us look for her, as you have a light; or do you call her; perhaps she will answer you."

"No, no," cried the child, "let's not trouble her. If she is in one of her dreams, and we should wake her, she would kill herself!"

"But she runs the risk of killing herself by walking on the brink of this invisible ravine."

"She sees what other people don't see. Keep quiet, unless you want to do her an injury and prevent her from returning to the house, where I am very sure she will return before me, as usual."

Christian had to abandon the idea of looking for the seer, especially as the light from the lantern had so little effect on the mist that it hardly enabled them to see where they were putting their feet. He assisted Olof to guide the sleigh with great care to the shore of the lake, and there the child, who was very clever in finding his way by instinct, asked him if he wished to get into the sleigh again and ride to the major's *bostælle*.

"No, no," said Christian, "I want to go to the Stollborg. Mustn't I turn to the right?"

"No," said Olof, "walk straight ahead and count your steps up to three hundred. If you take two more without coming to the cliff, then you have made a mistake."

"And in that case what must I do?"

"Coming, coming, my dear sir," replied Christian, removing his torn jacket and preparing to wash his bloody hands.

"Good God!" cried Gœfle, "are you wounded, or have you, perchance, killed all the bears in the Svenberg?"

"Something like it," replied Christian; "but I believe there is some human blood on me too. Ah! Mr. Gœfle, I have quite a story to tell!"

"You are as pale as death!" cried the advocate; "something more serious has happened to you than any exploit of the hunting-field. A quarrel? An accident? Tell me quickly, for God's sake! You take away my appetite!"

"Nothing has happened which need have that effect on you. Eat, Mr. Gœfle, eat. I will try to keep you company, and I will speak French because of——"

"Yes, yes," replied Gœfle, in French, "because of this little idiot's red ears. Say on, I am listening."

While Christian told the advocate with great detail and exactness of his adventures, his fancies, his conjectures and his emotions, they heard in the distance a tremendous blowing of horns. The baron had disappeared in the forest just as he had disappeared so often from his salons. After killing a stag, feeling that he was utterly incapable of enduring the cold and fatigue, and especially his impatience to carry through the affair to which Johan's letter related, he had returned to his sleigh, saying that he was going to take his position a little farther on, and sending word to the other hunters not to pay any heed to him, but to pursue their sport as they chose. Larrson and the lieutenant had joined the party, which, as they had predicted, had not seen the faintest trace of a bear, but had shot a few white stags and very many mammoth hares.

ting them go and hunting them when they are full-grown."

"But who killed and caught them all?" inquired Martina Akerstrom, the lieutenant's fair-haired *fiancée*.

"The lieutenant caught one cub," replied the major, with a meaning smile at his friend; "Corporal Duff and I caught the other. The peasant who was our guide wounded the big she-bear and attacked the black bear; but the two frantic beasts would inevitably have torn him to pieces, had not another of my friends, coming up all alone, disembowelled the first and put a bullet through the other one's brain when it was within half an inch of the poor devil of a peasant's head."

As will be seen, if the story of Christian's shot had been told a third time, the distance between the bear's head and the *danneman's* would have become too small to measure. Certainly the major did not think that he was lying; none the less his auditors cried out incredulously; but the lieutenant brought his fist down on the table, swearing a mighty oath that if the major exaggerated the distance at all, he made it too much and not too little. Certainly the lieutenant did not think that he was lying either: could his dear Osmund be mistaken?

"However that may be," said Margaret, "this bear-killer you speak of evidently has a deal of courage and presence of mind, and I should be very glad to congratulate him. Is it from excessive modesty that he keeps in the background, or is he not here?"

"He is not here," replied the major.

"Is that really true?" queried Martina Akerstrom, with an ingenuous glance at her lover.

"It is only too true," replied the big fellow, with an equally ingenuous sigh.

into ribbons will prove to you that he saw the enemy at close quarters."

"But it was an insane thing to take such a risk!" exclaimed Margaret. "Not for anything in the world would I look at such a sight!"

"But the name of this Meleager?" said Olga; "are we not to know it?"

"You must admit," rejoined the major, "that you have not tried very hard to guess it."

"True; but I see here all those of the guests at the castle whom I consider capable of the most marvellous exploits, and you say that your hero is not among us."

"You have forgotten someone who was at the castle last evening, at all events."

"It is of no use for me to think," said Olga; "I give it up; and, unless it was the black mask, the mysterious man, the literary merry-andrew, Christian Waldo——"

"Well, why shouldn't it have been he?" said the major, with a furtive glance at Margaret, whose cheeks were red as fire.

"Was it he?" she cried with artless eagerness.

"Great heaven, my dear girl!" said the young Russian, with more roughness of speech than malice, for she was not bad at heart, "one would say that it was a matter of deep interest to you."

"You know," interposed honest Potin with much tact, "that Countess Margaret is afraid of Christian Waldo."

"Afraid of him?" said the major, much surprised.

"Why, yes, to be sure," replied the governess, "and I confess that I am more or less so myself; a mask always frightens me."

"But you didn't see Christian's mask even."

"An additional reason," she replied with a laugh.

Margaret, with a melancholy sweetness. "But it is getting very cold here; shall we not go? It doesn't seem to me that there can be any danger on the lake."

The major understood or thought that he understood that Margaret was very desirous to talk with him, so he offered her his arm to escort her to her sleigh, and asked Mademoiselle Potin to allow him to ride with them to the castle. A few words in the lieutenant's ear gave him to understand that the major would be pleased to see him take Olga and Martina Akerstrom in another sleigh; and the honest lieutenant, without troubling himself to ask why, obeyed as he would have obeyed a military order, and installed his fiancée and the young Russian in his sleigh.

Thus Osmund was entirely at liberty to champion Christian's cause warmly and dispel the bad opinion which Margaret and Mademoiselle Potin, her discreet confidante, seemed to entertain of him. To accomplish his purpose he had only to narrate his conversation with Waldo and to tell of the adventurer's eccentric but noble resolution to adopt a rough and miserable mode of life rather than continue to lead a haphazard life of which he himself did not approve. Margaret listened with apparent tranquillity, as if it were simply a matter of passing judgment upon an indifferent question; but she was not a skilful actress, and the major, who had the delicacy to treat the matter as she desired that it should be treated, was not deceived as to the interest she felt in it in the secret recesses of her heart.

Meanwhile Baron Olaüs had been put to bed, and seemed quite calm; the physician, when questioned by the heirs, eluded their questions, according to his custom and in conformity with his instructions. They knew that their *dear and venerable uncle* had reached home

"He bled you, didn't he?" queried Johan. "He says he saved your life by that. Let us hope so; but you must set your mind on it. You know that your only remedy is your strength of will, which performs miracles!"

"I have none now!"

"No will? Nonsense! when you say that, your will is fixed upon something, and I will tell you what that something is: it is that those two *or three* Italians——"

"Yes, yes, all of them!" exclaimed the baron with a flash of energy.

"All right!" replied Johan. "I knew that I should bring you round. Did you look at the proof?"

"Unanswerable!"

"Stenson's handwriting?"

"And his signature.—Every detail! It's strange, it's very strange! but it is true."

"Where is the proof now?"

"In my hunting coat."

"I don't find it."

"You haven't looked thoroughly. It is there. No matter! Listen: I am utterly exhausted.—Stenson to the tower!"

"At once?"

"No, during the marionette exhibition."

"And the others?"

"After it is done."

"In the tower, also?"

"Yes, find a pretext."

"That is very easy. A piece of silver plate slipped into their baggage. Of course they must have stolen it."

"Very good."

"But suppose they mistrust something? suppose both Christians, the true and the false, fail to appear?"

"Where are they?"

"Who can tell in such a mist as this? I have given orders; but an hour ago no one had been seen to return to the Stollborg, which is surrounded and watched on all sides."

"In that case, what will you do?"

"When the proof is dead, that is to say, the wallet and the man who put it in your hands, the secret is dead. As Christian Waldo knows nothing at all——"

"Is that perfectly certain?"

"When we have him in our hands we will confess him."

"But we haven't him!"

"Perhaps we have—before this. I will go to the Stollborg myself, to make sure."

"Go at once. But suppose he refuses to come to the castle to-night?"

"In that case Captain Chimera will go there, with his——"

"Very good. And the advocate?"

"I will tell him first of all that you want to see him. But we must provide for every contingency. Suppose he doesn't obey?"

"That will prove——"

"That he is acting in concert with your enemies. In that case——"

"So much the worse for him!"

"That is a serious matter—a man so well known as he is!"

"Don't let them injure him; just keep him from meddling."

"Yes, if it is possible. But no matter, I will try. I will go at once to the Stollborg and slip your gold goblet into the donkey's pack-saddle. That will be the pretext

we need; but all this may make a noise, Christian is a fighter and the Stollborg is very near."

"So much the better! you must quiet him all the quicker."

"The major and his lieutenant have taken a great liking to this showman. We shall have to be careful in selecting the moment to act. The music will make a great noise in the castle, and we will have bombs and mortars discharged constantly outside."

"Well thought of!"

"How do you feel?"

"Better. By the way, it seems to me that I remember—Wait a moment, Johan. I saw that face again today. Where was it? Wait, I tell you! Did I dream it? Damnation! I can't—Johan, my head refuses—my brain is in a whirl as it was two days ago."

"Well, well, don't worry; I will find out about it, trust to me. Come, be calm, you will get over this attack all right. I will send Jacob to you."

Johan left the room. The baron, exhausted by the effort he had made, swooned in Jacob's arms, and the doctor, being hurriedly summoned, had much difficulty in restoring him to consciousness. He succeeded at last, and the invalid thereupon displayed a feverish sort of energy.

"Take yourself off, doctor," he said, "your face annoys me. You are ugly! everybody is ugly! *He* is handsome, so they say; but that will do him no good. When a man is dead, he soon becomes a ghastly spectacle, doesn't he? But if I die before *he* does—I would like to leave my fortune to him. That would be amusing! but if I live, he must die, there is no gainsaying that! Answer me, doctor; do you think I am mad?"

After talking at random thus for several moments, the

act any sort of business with the mysterious host; but she atoned for her disappointment by subjecting the Russian ambassador to the empire of her charms. As for the older ladies, they passed the mornings and afternoons in visiting one another in their respective apartments with much ceremony and solemnity. They conversed always on the same subjects: the fine weather, the magnificent hospitality of the lord of the castle, his marvellous but *slightly malicious* wit, his indisposition, which he endured so heroically in order not to cast a shadow on the pleasure of his guests; and, as they talked, they stifled Homeric yawns. Then they would talk politics and engage in bitter disputes, which did not interfere with their discoursing upon religious subjects in a most edifying way. As a general rule, they said to those who had just come in all manner of evil concerning those who had just gone out.

The only spirits which were able to contend successfully with the chill of this moral atmosphere were those of a score of young people of both sexes, who, with or without the consent of their families, had speedily formed attachments more or less tender, and who, by virtue of their unrestrained intercourse almost every hour in the day, acted as chaperons for one another. They were reinforced by several older persons of a cheerful and lively humor; governesses like Mademoiselle Potin; the minister's family, who were petted and made much of at all rustic functions; several old country gentlemen, free from pretensions and from the spirit of intrigue; the baron's young medical adviser, when he could escape from the clutches of his crafty and despotic patient; and, lastly, the illustrious Stangstadius, when they were able to catch him and detain him by teasing attentions in the guise of hyperbolical

XVI

While the young people at the new castle engaged in this innocent diversion, Mr. Gœfle and Christian were discussing from every imaginable standpoint the discoveries which the latter believed that he had made concerning his birth. The advocate did not share his young friend's ideas. He said they had been conceived in an imagination which was more ingenious than logical, and he seemed more than ever disturbed by an idea of his own which he longed and at the same time dreaded to disclose.

"Christian, Christian," he said, shaking his head, "don't distress yourself digging away at that nightmare. No, no! you are not Baron Olaüs's son; I would stake my right hand on it!"

"And yet," rejoined Christian, "there certainly are points of resemblance between him and me. While he was unconscious and his blood was flowing in the snow, I looked at him in utter dismay; his cruel and sardonic face had assumed the supremely calm expression which follows death. It seemed to me—of course, no man, unless he has passed his life before a mirror or is a portrait painter by trade, can form an exact idea of his own face—but it seemed to me that I had a vague remembrance of a face like that, and that it was my own. I had the same sensation when I saw that man the first time. I did not say to myself: 'I have seen him somewhere;' but I said: 'I know him; I have always known him.'"

"Very good, very good," said the advocate, "it was just so with me when I saw you the first time; and, indeed, as I look at you this moment, when your face is serious and preoccupied, I can see, if not a resemblance, at all events a most extraordinary, striking coincidence of type! And it is that very thing which makes me say to you: 'No, you are not his son!'"

"Now, Mr. Gœfle, I don't understand you at all."

"Oh! you are not alone in that! I don't understand myself. And yet I have an idea—a fixed idea! If that devil of a Stenson would only speak! But I tormented him for two hours to-day, all in vain; he said nothing of any consequence. Either he is beginning to wander at times, or else he is resolved to play at being deaf and distraught when he doesn't want to reply. If I had known that this Karina was mixed up in our affairs and that she is still alive, perhaps I might have got something out of him, with respect to her at least. You say that the *danneman's* son declares that she could tell secrets if she chose! Unfortunately she is still a crackbrained creature, so it seems, or else so thoroughly frightened that she doesn't dare relieve her mind by confession! However, we must find some way to relieve our doubts, for either I am mad, my dear Christian, or you are in your native province and, it may be, on the point of discovering who you are. Let us see! let us see! Come, help me to think—that is to say, listen to me. Your face is a source of equal anxiety and confusion at the new castle, and you must know——"

At that moment someone knocked at the door, after trying to enter without knocking; but the door was bolted on the inside, a precaution which Gœfle had taken without Christian's knowledge. Christian was about to open the door, but the advocate stopped him.

"Get under the staircase," he said, "and leave everything to me."

Christian, absorbed by his thoughts, obeyed mechanically, and Gœfle went and opened the door, but did not admit the newcomer. It was Johan.

"Is it you again?" said the advocate in a stern, sharp tone. "What do you want, Master Johan?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Gœfle; I wanted to speak with Christian Waldo."

"He is not here."

"But he has returned, Mr. Gœfle, I know."

"Look for him, but not in my room. I am working and I want to be left in peace. This is the third time that you have disturbed me."

"I ask a thousand pardons, Mr. Gœfle; but as you share your room with him, I thought that I might venture to come here and convey my lord's orders to the actor."

"Orders, orders—what orders?"

"In the first place, orders to prepare his theatre, in the second place, orders to come to the new castle at precisely eight o'clock, as he did last night, and lastly, orders to play something very amusing."

"You repeat yourself, my dear man; you have already told me the same thing twice to-day, in the same words. But are you certain that you know what you are saying? Isn't the baron seriously ill to-night, and while you are prowling about the old castle like a shadow, do you know what is going on at the new castle?"

"I saw my lord only a moment ago," replied Johan, with his perpetual smile of insolent humility. "He is perfectly well, and it is because he sent me here that I am compelled, to my great regret, to put you to so much trouble. I must add that my lord is very desirous

lose my good name; but your face must not be seen. You must not even show it to Ulf again. I shall not leave you, I propose to keep my eye on you. You are unquestionably threatened by some danger. Johan's furtive eyes are not the only ones I have seen glistening in the corridors of the Stollborg. Just at nightfall, unless I am very much mistaken, I saw a certain ill-favored scoundrel, whom his master the baron has adorned with the fanciful name of Captain Chimera, walking about the foot of the donjon on the ice. It is likely that we touched a spark to the powder with our last night's comedy. The baron has some suspicion with respect to you, and if you take my advice you will play sick and not go to the new castle."

"Oh! I beg your pardon, Mr. Gœfle, but it is not in the baron's power to frighten me. If I am lucky enough not to belong to him, I am ready to risk anything, and to give a vicious twist to the hand that dares so much as lift the curtains of my stage to look at me, if I choose to retain my *incognito*. Remember that I have killed two bears to-day, and that that has excited my nerves a little. Come, come, my dear uncle, excuse me, but it is late, and I have less than two hours to prepare for my performance. I must go and fetch one of my plays from my library, that is to say from the bottom of my box, and you will be kind enough to act it with me."

"Christian, I have no head for it to-day. I am no longer a *fabulist*, but an advocate, that is to say, a searcher after actual facts to the marrow of my bones! Your servant Puffo was not very drunk, I thought; he must be in the *gaard* yonder. Stay, I am going out, and as I pass I will send him to help you, as you insist on *fabulizing* to-day. Perhaps there is no harm in it; it

time I know how to set about it. I will return in an hour at the latest, and we will go to the castle together. I will watch the baron, I will go to his room to find out what he wants of me. He thinks himself very shrewd; I will be shrewder than he. Courage, Christian, until we meet again!—Come, Nils, hold a light for me. Ah! Christian, here comes Master Puffo, I believe."

Gœfle did in fact meet Puffo in the doorway as he went out.

"Well, there you are!" said Christian to his servant. "Are you better to-day?"

"I am very well, master," replied the Livournian in an even more surly tone than usual.

"To work then, my boy! we haven't a minute to lose. We are to give the *Marriage of Folly*, the play which you know best, which you know by heart; you don't need a rehearsal."

"No, if you don't put in too much new matter out of your own head."

"As to that, I make no promises; but I will keep strictly to the cues, never fear. Hurry to the new castle with the ass and the baggage; set up the stage and arrange the scenery. See, I have picked out everything we need; it is all in this one bundle: I will dress the characters and follow you. If you find that you must read over the lines, we shall have time over yonder. It takes fine folk, you know, a quarter of an hour to take their seats and stop talking."

Puffo took a few steps toward the door, then halted as if in hesitation. Johan, while keeping him a prisoner at the Stollborg without his knowledge, had by his conversation with him excited his wrath against his master, and Puffo was impatient to pick a quarrel with Christian; but he knew that he was active and determined; and it

temptation to thrash you, as you deserved, for your sottishness."

"Thrash me!" cried Puffo, advancing upon him with a threatening air. "Let's see you do it. Come on!"

And as he spoke he brandished a marionette over his master's head by way of club. The weapon was none the less dangerous for being ridiculous, the *burattino's* head being made of very hard wood, to resist the blows received in stage battles. Holding the figure by its leather skirt and swinging it round his head like a flail, Puffo in his rage might and perhaps desired to break his adversary's skull. Christian caught the marionette on the wing, and seizing Puffo by the throat with the other hand, threw him on the floor at his feet.

"You infernal sot," he said, with his knee on his breast, "you deserve a sound thrashing; but I dislike to strike you. Off with you, I discharge you and I wish I may never hear your name again. I have paid you a week's wages in advance and I owe you nothing; but, as you have probably drunk it up before this, I will give you enough to take you back to Stockholm. Get up, and don't try to play any of your tricks on me again, or I'll strangle you."

Puffo, somewhat bruised, rose to his feet without a word. He was not naturally of a murderous disposition. He was humiliated and cast down. Perhaps he realized that he had been in the wrong; but he was especially intent upon one thing, which attracted Christian's attention: that was the picking up of ten or twelve gold pieces which had escaped from his belt and had rolled with him on the floor.

"What is all this?" said Christian, seizing his arm. "Stolen money?"

"No!" cried the Livournian, raising his hand with an

tellect. What he did understand was the money that was slipped into his pocket. His intelligence was equal to the following reasoning: "If they pay me to keep my hands off, they would pay me much more to act." So it had occurred to him to take the initiative. He had expected to find Christian unarmed and unsuspecting; his courage had failed him and his villainy too. Christian was so kind that the wretch's hand had trembled: what was he to do, now that he was beaten and humiliated?

While Puffo indulged in the very limited amount of reflection of which he was capable, Christian, deeply agitated, and mentally rather than physically fatigued, had seated himself on his box and was absorbed in melancholy meditation.

"What a wretched life!" he said to himself as he gazed mechanically at the marionette lying on the floor, which had been so near beating out his brains. "What a wretched society to live in, that of uneducated men! But it is more necessary than ever for me to accustom myself to it. If I return to the lowest ranks of the common people, from which I probably came, and from which I have tried in vain to cut loose, I shall certainly have to deal roughly more than once, by strength of wrist alone, with certain vulgar natures which gentleness and sentiment could never convince. O Jean Jacques! did you ever anticipate that for your Emile? No, of course not; and yet you were stoned in your humble cottage and forced to turn your back on a country life because you were unable to make yourself feared by those by whom you could not make yourself understood!

"Let me see, who are you who came near killing me?" continued Christian, speaking aloud now, in order to rouse his energy, and picking up the marionette which

lay face downward on the floor. "O Jupiter! it is you, my poor little Stentarello! you, my favorite, my protégé, my most trusty servant! you, the oldest of my whole troupe, whom I lost in Paris and found again so miraculously in the forest paths of Bohemia! No, it is impossible. You would not have injured me, you would have turned against the assassins rather. You are worth more than a lot of those big, stupid, ill-conditioned marionettes who claim to belong to the human race, and whose hearts are harder than their heads. Come, my poor little fellow, come and put on a white collar and let me give your dusty coat a whisk of the brush. I swear that I will never desert you again! You shall travel with me, secretly, in order not to make serious-minded folk laugh, and when you are in despair for a sight of the footlights we will have long talks together; I will confide my trials to you, and your merry smile and bright eyes will remind me of the follies of my past—and of the dreams of love that bloomed and vanished within the frowning walls of the Stollborg!"

A childish laugh caused Christian to turn his head: it was Master Nils, who had stolen into the room on tiptoe, and was jumping with joy and clapping his hands at sight of the marionette moving briskly, as if it were alive, in Christian's nimble fingers, as he practised for the performance with it.

"Oh! give me that pretty little fellow!" cried the delighted child; "lend him to me a minute and let me play with him!"

"No, no," said Christian, hastily arranging Stentarello's costume; "my little boy plays with nobody but me, and he hasn't time either. Isn't Mr. Gœfle coming back?"

"Oh! let me see all those things!" exclaimed Nils,

excitedly, casting a bewildered glance into the box which Christian had opened, and in which the laced hats, the swords, the plumed turbans and the pearl wreaths of his miniature company were thrown pell-mell. Christian tried to rid himself of Nils by gentle means, but the child was so persistent in his longing to touch all those marvellous things, that it was necessary to speak sharply to him and frown fiercely to prevent him from seizing the performers and their outfits. Thereupon he began to pout, and went off to the table, where he sat down saying that he would tell Mr. Gœfle that no one would try to amuse him. His Aunt Gertrude had promised him that he should be amused while he was travelling about, and he had had no fun at all.

"But I can get along without you, you mean old thing!" he said, making a wry face at Christian. "I can make pretty boats out of paper, and you shan't see the ones I make!"

"That's right, that's right!" said Christian, who was rapidly costuming his characters, relying on the advocate's aid; "make your boats; make a lot of them and let me alone."

As he secured the hats and cloaks on the heads and around the necks of his little figures, Christian kept looking at the clock and was vexed at Mr. Gœfle's failure to return. He tried to send Nils to the *gaard*, to ask him to make haste, but Nils sulked and pretended not to hear.

"If only we have time to read over the lines!" said Christian to himself. "I hardly remember them myself! I have had so much else on my mind to-day. By the way, I promised the major a hunting scene. Where shall I put it in? No matter where! An interview

stolen from the scene between Moron and the bear in the *Princess of Elis.* Stentarello will be the brave hunter. He will be delightful; he will sneer at people who kill bears from behind a net—like the baron! But perhaps Puffo has carried off the lines of the play! I handed it to him."

Christian began to look about him for his manuscript. To make another copy meant another half-hour's work, and the clock was striking seven. He searched the box which contained the whole of his little repertory. He upset and overturned everything; he was in a fever of excitement. The idea of not appearing at the new castle at the appointed hour, and of seeming to shrink from the baron's hatred was intolerable to him. He felt that his heart was overflowing with rage against his enemy, and it may be that love also took a hand in the game. He fairly burned to defy the Snow Man openly in Margaret's presence, and to show him that a mere strolling actor was bolder than many of the noble guests at the castle.

At that moment he glanced at Nils, who, with the utmost deliberation and gravity, was making what it pleased him to call little boats, that is to say, nameless objects of various shapes, with bits of paper folded and refolded, and crumpled, torn, rolled up and tossed on the floor, when the result was not to his liking.

"Ah! you infernal brat!" cried Christian, snatching a handful of papers from him, "would you make boats of my repertory?"

Nils began to weep and shriek, swearing that the papers were not Christian's, and struggling to recover them.

Suddenly Christian, as he hurriedly unfolded the *boats* in order to collect the fragments of his manuscript, became serious and stopped short in what he was doing.

The papers were not his, and the writing was not his, but his name, or rather one of his names, written by an unknown hand, had leaped into his eyes, so to speak, and this phrase, in Italian: *Cristiano del Lago is fifteen years old to-day*, aroused his curiosity to the highest pitch.

"Here, here," he said to the child, who was still pulling at his coat and shrieking for what he called *his paper*, "play with the marionettes and leave me in peace!"

Nils, seeing a handful of little men on the table, was speedily absorbed in the blissful occupation of looking at them and touching them, while Christian, taking the chair which the child had left and drawing the candle toward him, set about deciphering an execrable handwriting, Italian in style and eclectic in orthography, every word of which, whether actually read or only guessed at, surprised him beyond all measure.

"Where did you get these papers?" he asked the child, while he continued to collect the torn and crumpled fragments and to decipher them.

"Oh! sir, how fine you are with your long moustaches!" said Nils to the marionette at which he was gazing in an ecstasy of delight.

"Will you answer?" shouted Christian; "where did you get these papers? Are they Mr. Gœfle's?"

"No, no," Nils replied at last, after turning a deaf ear to several repetitions of the question. "I didn't take them from Mr. Gœfle; he threw them away, and the papers he throws away are mine. To make boats, Mr. Gœfle told me this morning."

"You lie! Mr. Gœfle didn't throw these papers away! These are letters; people don't throw letters away; they burn them. You took these letters from the drawer of this table?"

"No!"

"Or from the bedroom?"

"No, no!"

"Tell me the truth! quick!"

"No!"

"I'll pull your ears!"

"Then I won't stay here."

Christian caught the boy as he attempted to make his escape with the marionettes.

"If you choose to tell me the truth," he said, "I'll give you a beautiful little horse with a red and gold saddle-cloth."

"Let me see it."

"Here it is," said Christian, producing the toy in question which formed a part of his properties. "Now will you speak, you rascal?"

"Well, this is how it was," said the child. "Just now I went to light Mr. Gœfle to Mr. Stenson's room, you know, the old man who lives on the other courtyard and can't hear what you say to him."

"Very good, I know; tell me quickly and don't lie, or I'll take back my horse."

"Well, I waited for Mr. Gœfle in Mr. Stenson's room where there was a fire, while Mr. Gœfle talked to him very loud in the study next door."

"What did they say?"

"I don't know; I didn't listen; I was playing with the fire on the hearth. Then all of a sudden some men went into the study and said like this: 'Mr. Stenson, the baron's been waiting an hour for you. Why don't you come? You must come with us straight away.'—Then they had a dispute, and Mr. Gœfle said: 'Mr. Stenson cannot go; he hasn't got time.'—And Mr. Stenson said: 'I must go. I am not afraid; I am going.'—And then

"'Why, then we will go to the Stollborg; we shall have our orders.'

"As soon as these two villains were out of hearing the lieutenant led us out of our hiding-place and whispered to us:

"'Not a word here!'

"Then he took us, with the utmost precaution, to the great hunting gallery; and, when we were safely there, he said:

"'Allow me to leave you and go in search of the major.'

"The lieutenant had understood the slang used by the bandits: they were to attack Mr. Christian Waldo on the charge of having stolen something, to take him to the tower, and to kill him if he defended himself; and one of them had said:

"'That would be the best way out of it!'

"The lieutenant was very angry. He said to us as he left us:

"'All this probably starts from a higher source than you imagine. There is politics underneath it; Christian Waldo must be in possession of some State secret.'"

"Oh! no, I give you my word that I am not," interposed Christian, smiling at the lieutenant's simplicity.

"I do not ask you the question, Mr. Christian," rejoined the ingenuous and kindly Martina. "However that may be, the lieutenant and the major, as well as Corporal Duff, swore that they would do their duty and defend you, even if their action should seriously offend the baron; but they thought that they ought to act with much prudence, and, enjoining the most profound secrecy on us, they started off on foot, well armed, noiselessly and separately, agreeing to meet here, where they

minds are at rest concerning you, we ought, I think, to begin to be seriously anxious about the major—and the other officers."

"Ah! Margaret," said Christian to the young countess in a low voice, while Mr. Gœfle, Martina and Peterson consulted as to the best course to be pursued, "you came here in this way——"

"Should I," she interrupted, "have allowed a man like Mr. Gœfle to be murdered without making an attempt to assist him?"

"No, surely not," replied Christian, whose gratitude was too sincere and too warm to allow any feeling of self-conceit to lead him to offend against delicacy, "you should not have done it; but your courage is none the less great. You might have met those cutthroats! Few women would have carried devotion, humanity so far as to come themselves——"

"Martina came with me," interposed Margaret hastily.

"Martina is engaged to the lieutenant," rejoined Christian. "She might not have been able to make up her mind to come for—Mr. Gœfle."

"Pardon me, Mr. Christian, she would have come for—anyone, no matter who, when the life of a fellow creature was at stake. But I pray you, look and see if those gentlemen are not coming, for it doesn't seem to me that the danger has passed."

"Yes, yes," said Christian, collecting his thoughts, "there is danger still. I realize it now that you are here. Great God? why did you come?"

And the young man, torn by contradictory sentiments, was overjoyed because she had come, and distressed that she was exposed to the risk of witnessing an exceedingly unpleasant scene. Moreover, was not the presence of those two young ladies at the Stollborg well

"But I hear him drawing the bolts of the other door; he is opening it!"

"He is opening it? Ah! then our friends have come!"

"No, no, I assure you that he is going away!"

And Margaret involuntarily started to follow Christian. Gœfle detained her, and, motioning to Peterson not to leave the women, he attempted to overtake the adventurer. But he had already secured the door on the outside and was running toward the gate of the courtyard, calling Larrson at the top of his lungs, and ready to defend himself if he should succeed in attracting the assassins, when a bullet knocked from his hand the torch he was carrying and buried him once more in the white darkness which the moon's rays could not pierce and which lay like a shroud on the earth.

At the report of the pistol, Gœfle, alarmed for his young friend, uttered a terrible oath, Martina shrieked, Margaret sank into a chair, and Peterson ran to the advocate's side. By their combined efforts they might perhaps have succeeded in opening the door; but they did not work together. Peterson, being wholly devoted to his young mistress, thought only of preventing the malefactors from entering, and had no idea that Mr. Gœfle wished to go out and fly to Christian's assistance.

During this misunderstanding, while the honest advocate cursed lustily, Christian, overjoyed to be free to act at last, had rushed at the first man whom he spied in front of him; but that man, evidently misled by the fog, did not suppose that Christian was so near and took flight. Christian pursued him, hurling insults and defiance at him, while another bandit followed swiftly on his heels without speaking. Christian heard the sharp beat of his enemy's feet on the frozen snow behind him,

Christian hoped to throw them off the scent one by one. He tried to count their voices and footsteps. He had an immense advantage, in that he had unintentionally omitted to remove the soleless and seamless felt boots which had been lent him in the morning for the hunt. They were so flexible that they impeded his movements no more than if he had been barefooted, and furthermore, they made it possible for him to run on the snow almost noiselessly, whereas he could hear the slightest movement of his enemies, who were shod with less regard to comfort and caution.

Again he stopped and listened. They were coming toward him, but did not see him; their gait was uncertain. He heard these words within ten paces:

"What's that? it's I!"

As the bandits had met unexpectedly in the fog, their line of battle was evidently broken. That being so, nothing could be easier than to escape them. Christian did not think of such a thing. His blood was up; he did not propose that those villains should return to the Stollborg in search of him. He shouted to them, naming himself and defying them, falling back a little, but tacking back and forth, so to speak, in order to irritate them and separate them, hoping to engage one without allowing himself to be attacked by all. His presence of mind was so perfect that he succeeded in counting them at last: there were still three of them, Massarelli having made four.

Despite this extraordinary self-possession, Christian was intensely excited, but his excitement was blended with an almost painful sort of pleasure, like the intoxication of revenge. So that he was almost disappointed when he heard more footsteps behind him, steps as soft as his own, by which he recognized at once the felt boots

fine gentlemen! But, if you are not too much out of breath, Christian, pray blow a blast on your horn and try to guide our other friends hither, for we have been waiting and looking for them an hour. Here is the instrument."

"It will be much better to discharge your pistols," said Christian.

"No, there have been enough reports of firearms already. Blow the horn, I tell you."

Christian did as he was told, but only the corporal joined them.

"You see," said the major to Christian, "this little adventure must be supposed to have been simply a walking party, during which we lost our way and found it again."

"I don't understand you."

"It must be so represented, I tell you, for a few hours, so that the baron may not suspect the result of the affair too soon, and may not take measures to set the *other* blackguards on us whom he doubtless has in reserve. As for him," he added, lowering his voice, "his turn will come, never fear."

"His turn has already come," said Christian, "I will take care of him."

"Softly, softly, my dear friend! you have no such mission. That is my affair, and I am fully decided to take stern measures now that we have a reasonable certainty and proofs. But we cannot proceed against a noble and a member of the Diet except in pursuance of superior orders; we will obtain them, do not doubt it. What you have to do for the moment, my friend, is to obey me, for I call upon you in the name of the laws and of honor to assist me as I desire and according to such orders as I may give you."

a matter as he imagined to prove even a patent and undeniable fact.

"And then," he added, "I regret to say that we are a little short of witnesses. Mr. Gœfle saw nothing except the result of the affair. We find here neither Stenson, nor his nephew, nor your servant. I hoped that we should arrive in greater force to defend you and to testify to the facts *de visu*. The sub-lieutenant and four soldiers whom I sent for have not yet appeared. Although our *bostœlles* and the *torps* of the privates are only a short distance away, it may be two hours, thanks to this fog, before we have here eight men under arms."

"What in heaven's name is the need of eight men to guard two?"

"Do you imagine, Christian, that the baron will sit still and do nothing when, for the first time, one of his diabolical schemes falls through? I don't know what he may devise, but he certainly will devise something, though it be to set fire to the Stollborg. That is why I have determined to pass the night here, in order to capture, with proper assistance, the other blackguards who will probably be dispatched against us, perhaps with offers of service, perhaps not. The major part of that staff of foreign servants is simply a band of thieves and assassins, and we must try to take them all red-handed. Then I promise you that the magistrates will muster courage to take stern measures against the great noble, when he is reduced to the necessity of invoking, and invoking in vain, the assistance of his peasants. If we do not proceed in this way, be sure that we shall lose the game. Everybody will be afraid; the baron will find some way to clear his skirts from all responsibility for this affair, or to steal our prisoners away from us. You will be regarded as an assassin, and we as visionary crea-

baron, if we can succeed in releasing old Stenson, who has been taken off to the castle willy-nilly. You must help us, gentlemen, to find some way to do it."

"You must not think of such a thing, Mr. Gœfle," replied the major. "The châtelain dispenses justice on his domain, and consequently in his own house. I do not know what connection there may be between Mr. Stenson's affair and Christian's, but in my opinion we should do nothing to complicate the latter. First of all I would like to know whether Christian did actually find in his pack-saddle a golden goblet which the baron ordered to be placed there, after the manner of Joseph when he wished to put his brothers to the test, but, I presume, with much less pacific intentions."

"Faith," said Christian, "I know nothing about it. Come with me and let us see."

They went to the stable, where they found Puffo in a corner, pale as death and begging for mercy. They searched him; the golden goblet was in his pocket. He confessed after a fashion. About an hour before, he had seen Johan bring that valuable article thither with a purpose which he had divined, and not thinking that he was watched, he had taken possession of it, in order to carry it back to the castle, so he said, and prevent his master's being charged with a theft of which he was innocent; but when he attempted to make his escape, he found that he was locked into the stable, and the door had withstood all his efforts to open it when he heard the noise of the battle and tried to go to Christian's assistance. By reason of these very suspicious admissions the major caused Master Puffo to be bound like the rest, and he was taken to the *gaard,* where Peterson, being called upon for assistance, was ordered to stand guard over the three prisoners in conjunction with the corporal. The

fiancé; but as she was standing near the door, she heard the major express a desire for her corroboration of the testimony, and having satisfied herself, by listening to the various voices, that she had no reason to fear any misconstruction of her conduct from those who were present, she opened the door and entered the room. She longed with all her heart to declare and to attest with her signature, like the others, that the infamous theft imputed to Christian as part and parcel of the baron's scheme had been previously discussed in her hearing.

The major and the lieutenant could not restrain an exclamation of surprise when she appeared, but Gœfle, with his usual presence of mind, undertook to explain everything.

"Miss Akerstrom could not have come alone," he said. "She had no one to come with her, and you had enjoined silence upon her so strictly that she could not think of any other escort than the Countess Margaret's coachman, the countess being also in the secret. Naturally the Countess Margaret insisted on accompanying her friend; otherwise Peterson might have made some objection on account of the bad weather."

The advocate put forward other sound arguments to prove how *naturally* the thing had come about. Martina, with her untutored simplicity, might well have said that things had not happened exactly as Mr. Gœfle represented, and she was so far from suspecting Margaret's predilection for Christian that she would not have failed to do so, had she not been engrossed by the duty of serving tea and oatmeal gruel with Nils, who had also discovered in the *gaard* the dishes set aside by the absent Ulphilas for the supper of his uncle and the guests at the Stollborg. Thus the dismal bear chamber pre-

in very bad shape to be taken before a court. The lieutenant was anxious because the major was anxious. As for Mr. Gœfle, he was alarmed on old Stenson's account, and he drifted back to his unspoken conjectures concerning Christian's birth and future.

In fact the situation of affairs was nowise cheering to anyone of the party, when at last someone rang and knocked at the courtyard gate. It might be the officer with the expected reinforcement, but it might also be a fresh party to assist or rescue the first. The major and the lieutenant cocked their pistols and rushed out, ordering Christian, with the authority they had assumed for the occasion, to stay behind, and not to attack until they gave the word. Then Larrson, having resolutely thrown the gate open, without asking any questions, and at the risk of falling under the blows of those he wished to capture, recognized with unbounded satisfaction his friend the sub-lieutenant and the four soldiers who lived nearest to his quarters. Thereupon all his apprehensions vanished. It was improbable that the baron, receiving no news of the event, the result of which he must be awaiting with impatience, would not send a part of his *vile crew* to investigate.

The sub-lieutenant made his report, which was not long. He had gone astray with his men; he had found the Stollborg only by chance, after wandering about a long while in the fog. He had met nobody, or if he had met anybody, he knew nothing about it.

"However," he added, "the fog is beginning to lift along the shores of the lake, and it will be possible to make a round within a quarter of an hour. As the blowing of horns and the explosion of fireworks near the castle has entirely ceased, we can hear the slightest noise out-of-doors."

while if you hadn't been here!" said Olof to Christian. "I know the outside of the Stollborg well enough; I could come here with my eyes shut; but when you come to the inside, why, I've never been inside. You can see for yourself that I couldn't go back to the mountain right away in such infernal weather as this. But I thought it seemed to be lifting a little at last, and after spending two hours at the major's *bostælle*, I left my horse there and started out on foot so as not to frighten my father; but first I thought I'd bring you a wallet you left in the sleigh, *Herr* Christian. Here it is. I didn't open it. Everything inside is just as you left it. I wouldn't trust it to anyone else; for my father says that papers are sometimes more valuable than money."

As he spoke, Olof handed Christian a black morocco wallet which Christian did not recognize.

"Perhaps this is yours?" he said to the major. "It may have been in the clothes you lent me?"

"No, I don't know anything about it," replied Larrson.

"It may be the lieutenant's then?"

"Oh! no, indeed," said Martina; "he has no wallets except those I embroider for him."

"At all events we can make sure of it," said the major; "he is in the *gaard* yonder."

"Wait a moment!" cried the advocate, who was still beset by his fixed idea; "didn't you tell me, Christian, that you upset the baron this afternoon when you were returning from the hunt?"

"You mean that the baron upset me and was upset himself by the rebound," replied Christian.

"Very good," continued the advocate, "everything in both sleighs was thrown out in a heap on the road, from bears to wallets, and this is——"

"No, no," cried Christian, "these ladies must not be mixed up in a lawsuit."

"I am very sorry, Christian," rejoined the major, "but the laws are superior to us, and I propose to do my duty strictly. A man has been killed to-night, whom it would certainly be much better for us to have in our hands alive. I know very well that you had nothing to do with his death, and that you are wounded yourself. You are impulsive, you are fearless and generous; but you are not prudent when your own welfare is involved. I tell you that this business may bring you to the scaffold, because you will frankly admit the fact that you provoked your enemies, while the vile knaves will impudently deny everything. So let us read these papers and neglect no means to assure the triumph of the truth."

"Yes, yes, major, read, I will listen," cried Margaret, turning deathly pale as she looked at Christian's blood-stained sleeve; "I will testify to the truth, though I sacrifice my honor!"

Christian could not resign himself to accept the noble girl's self-sacrifice, and he submitted impatiently to the major's assumption of authority over her. But the major was in the right, and Christian realized it, for his honor as an officer was no less deeply involved than Christian's security. He suddenly sat down and covered his face with his hands, the better to conceal and restrain the fierce emotions which assailed him, while the major read aloud Johan's journal, written by himself and despatched to the baron during the hunt.

"This paper is very mysterious to me," said the major as he finished; "it proves a well-matured plot against Christian; but——"

"But you cannot understand," interrupted Mr. Gœfle,

had been bewitched and outraged by an unknown man; and thus she saved the child, whose mother she claimed to be, from the investigations of his *enemies*.

"To remove the said child out of reach of the suspicions which were beginning to endanger his life, notwithstanding the precautions taken up to that time, I, Adam Stenson, took him to Austria, where I have a married sister, who can testify to my arrival at her house with a child called Christian, who spoke the Dalecarlian dialect.

"And, acting on the advice of my faithful friend and confidant, Taddeo Manasseh, of the religion of the Old Testament, formerly well known in Sweden by the name of Manasseh, and very highly esteemed by the late Baron Adelstan Waldemora as a man of his word, of sound discretion, and of uprightness in his business as a dealer in objects of art, of which the said baron was an enthusiastic collector, I, the undersigned, journeyed to the city of Perugia in Italy, where my said friend Taddeo Manasseh then resided; and there, in carnival time, I presented myself, masked, to the most honorable Sylvio Goffredi, professor of ancient history at the University of Perugia, and Sofia Negrisoli, his lawful wife, of the family of the illustrious physician of that name; and to them I delivered, entrusted, and I may say *gave* the said Christian Waldemora, without any information whatever as to his family name, his birthplace or the reasons which led me to part with him.

"In giving that beloved child to the said Goffredis, I considered that I fulfilled the desire of the deceased Baroness Hilda, who wished that he should be brought up far from his *enemies*, by educated and virtuous people, who, with no selfish motive, would love him as their own son and fit him to bear worthily some day the name

"I think so," Christian replied.

"Did he not at one time offer you assistance on behalf of your family?"

"Yes, I declined."

"Do you know his signature?"

"Very well. He had several transactions with Signor Goffredi."

"Look at this; is it his hand?"

"It is."

"For my own part," continued Mr. Gœfle, "I recognize Adam Stenson's hand and style perfectly in the body of the document. Be good enough to open that box, Major Larrson, and notice the similarity. Here are accounts drawn up and signed by the old steward, at almost the same time—that is in 1751 and 1752. Indeed, his writing has not changed; his hand is still steady. Here is a proof of what I say: three verses from the Bible, written yesterday, the meaning of which, as applied to his frame of mind, is very plain and well worth noting."

The major made the comparison, but the enigma was still obscure so far as he was concerned, if not altogether unsolvable. Had the baron manufactured false documents to prove that his sister-in-law had left no heirs to contest his inheritance? He was quite capable of it; but Mr. Gœfle had seen those documents. Indeed, he probably had them in his hands, as he had succeeded to the practice of his father, to whom they had been entrusted.

"I have them at my office in Gevala," the advocate replied. "They have been verified by experts, and are certainly genuine; but does it not seem probable now that they were extorted from Baroness Hilda by force or fear? Be calm, Christian, everything will be cleared up.

"You know perfectly well that I cannot do it!" cried the major, deeply moved and intensely excited. "I have no rights as against the authority of the lord of the manor, especially in the matter of punishing servants, and if the baron chooses to torture that old man, he will have no lack of pretexts."

At this point the major was interrupted by Christian, who could hold his excitement in check no longer. He proposed to go to the new castle; he proposed to set Stenson free or to lay down his own life.

"What!" he said, "don't you see that in this den of wild beasts they recoil at nothing? I understand only too well what that is which is called in bitter and ghastly derision the *chamber of roses*. And that poor old man, who has no more than strength enough to draw breath, that loyal servant who saved me from my *enemies*, as he says in his declaration, and who, after undergoing the fatigue of a long journey, has devoted a long lifetime of silence and toil to me—it may be that at this very moment he is dying in agony—still for my sake! No, that shall not be; you shall not detain me, major! I do not acknowledge your authority over me; and if I must cut myself a path, sword in hand—why, so much the worse for you! You will have brought it on yourself!"

"Silence!" cried Gœfle, snatching from Christian's hand the sword he had just taken from the table, "silence! Listen! someone is walking in the walled-up room over our heads."

"How can that be possible," said the major, "if it is really walled up? Indeed, I cannot hear anything."

"It's not footsteps that I hear," rejoined Gœfle; "but hush, and look at the chandelier."

They looked in silence, and they not only saw the chandelier tremble, but heard its copper ornaments

While the *danneman* thus explained his anxiety, the lieutenant made a communication to the major which seemed to make a profound impression on him.

"What is the matter, pray?" queried the advocate.

"The matter is," replied Larrson, "that we are all under the empire of black ideas which make us very ridiculous. The lieutenant, as he was making his round, heard what seemed like the wailing of a human voice, and our soldiers are so terrified by all they have heard about the *gray lady* of the Stollborg, that they would have run away before this, except for their respect for discipline. It is time to have done with this nonsense, and as there is no way of getting from here into this walled-up room, we must examine it carefully on the outside, and see if this phantasmagoria is not being used to-day by the cutthroats from over yonder to set a trap for us. Come with us, Christian, as you thought that you discovered a way of climbing up."

"No, no!" said Christian; "that would take too long, and might prove to be impossible. It seems to me much the surer and quicker way to cut through this wall. It is simply a matter of starting the first brick."

As he spoke, Christian tore the great map of Sweden from its rings, and, armed with his mineralogist's hammer, attacked the wall with desperate energy, now striking the echoing brick with the square head of the tool, now thrusting the sharp point into the holes he had made, and prying out great fragments held together by mortar, which fell with a crash on the resonant staircase. It would have been quite useless to attempt to balk his design. A sort of frenzy impelled him to break away from the inaction to which they sought to restrict him. The strange ideas he had conceived touching the presence of some prisoner in that mysterious room returned

"Can I speak to her?" said Christian, who had followed Karina.

"Yes, you can," replied the *danneman;* "she will answer you if your voice pleases her."

"Karina Bœtsoï, what seek you here?" said Christian.

"Do not call me Karina Bœtsoï," she replied; "Karina is dead. I am the *vala* of bygone days, she who must not be called by name!"

"Where do you seek to go?"

"To the bear chamber. Have they walled up the door already?"

"No," said Christian; "I will lead you there. Will you take my hand?"

"Go on!" said Karina; "I will follow you."

"Can you see me?"

"Why should I not see you? Are we not in the land of the dead? Are you not poor Baron Adelstan? You ask me for the mother of your child? I have just been praying for her and for him. And now—come, come—I will tell you all!"

And Karina, who seemed suddenly to realize where she was, passed through the door and descended the stairs, causing Martina and Margaret a terrible fright, although young Olof, who had crept upstairs and heard everything, had assured them that they had no reason to fear the poor visionary.

"Don't be afraid," said Christian, who followed Karina and was followed by the two officers, the advocate and the *danneman;* "watch her every movement; try with me to guess the thought that guides her. Is she not going through the form of paying the last rites to a person who has died?"

"Yes," replied Margaret, "she closes the eyes, kisses

But Karina seemed not to hear any other voice than Christian's.

Martina Akerstrom volunteered to answer the question.

"Yes," she said, "I know that ballad: it was written long ago by Baroness Hilda. My father found it among the papers which were taken from the Stollborg and left at the parsonage by his predecessor. There were some Scandinavian poems too, translated into Swedish verse and set to music by that poor lady, who was very accomplished and a very great artist in music. They tried to use them as evidence against her, as if they proved that she worshipped the heathen gods. My father blamed the conduct of the former minister, and he has carefully preserved the manuscripts."

"Now, Karina," said Gœfle to the seer, who had relapsed into a sort of placid trance, "will you not tell us something more?"

"Leave me," replied Karina, who had entered upon another phase of her dream; "leave me! I must go to the *hogar*, to meet him who is soon to return."

"Who told you so?" queried Christian.

"The stork which lights on the roof and brings news of their absent sons to the mothers who sit in the chimney corner. That is why I have put on this dress that my beloved mistress gave me, so that he may see something of his mother. For three days I have been waiting and singing to draw him hither; but he is *here* at last. I feel that he is near me. Pluck blue-bells and violets, and call old Stenson, so that he may rejoice before he dies. Poor Stenson!"

"Why do you say *poor Stenson?*" cried Christian, in dismay. "Do you see him in your vision?"

"Leave me," replied Karina. "I have said, and now the *vala* returns to the darkness!"

"It is I! it is I! The major has sent me to the castle!"

"Ah! the madman! the brave fellow!" cried Gœfle "He takes no one's advice but his own: he is going single-handed, to the rescue of Stenson!"

Christian had indeed flown like a bird of night, to us the *danneman's* expression, through the cleft in the o wall. Stenson's name, as uttered by Karina, had tor his heart.

"Let him rejoice before he dies!" she had said at th close of her prophetic vision.

Was Stenson really in danger of death from the blov of his jailers, or did those heartrending words imply o of those cruel, bitter disappointments to which hope la us open?

Christian felt that he was bound hand and foot, pa alyzed, by the major's circumspection. A quarrel w imminent between them on that subject, and, althou Christian realized the danger of escaping through t cleft, he preferred to take his chances with the precip rather than with the excellent friend whom Provider had sent to him. He had seen that perilous exit from t tower at too great a distance and with too much upon mind to examine it carefully. The fog was rising ve slowly, and the surrounding objects were still very in tinct; but Karina had come that way.

"O God!" he said, "give to my devotion the sup natural faculties which Thou dost sometimes vouchsaf a disordered mind!"

And, being well aware that agility and precau would be of no use to him, as he could see nothing th feet below him, the child of the lake, relying upon miraculous power which had protected him hithe rushed headlong down the precipice which he had dared to scale by daylight.

had been pointed out to him at the ball as the chât
lain's *presumptuous* heirs. They seemed profoundly a
tated, talked in low tones, and turned constantly towa
a door through which they were evidently awaiting an
iously the arrival of some important news.

Giving them no time to scrutinize him or to reali
what he was doing, Christian hurried through that doo
saying to himself that he could probably reach the baron
apartments in that way; but as he was passing throu
a passage of some length he heard a horrible groanin
He at once ran in the direction of that noise and pass
through an open door into a room where he sudden
found himself in the presence of Stangstadius, who w
sitting near a small lamp, placidly reading a newspap
and apparently not in the slightest degree disturbed
the terrifying groans, which were much nearer there a
more distinct.

"What does this mean?" demanded Christian, s
ing his arm. "Isn't it somewhere about here that m
are being put to the torture?"

Doubtless Christian's appearance, with his knife
his hand, was far from reassuring, for the illustri
geologist leaped from his chair in terror, crying:

"What's the matter? what do you want? wh
that you say about——"

"The baron's apartments?" demanded the yo
man laconically, in such an imperative tone that it
not occur to Stangstadius to enter into any discussion

"That way," he replied, pointing to the left; and
resumed his reading, overjoyed to see him take
leave, and saying to himself that the baron had s
strange ruffians in his service, and that one was li
to meet in his house fellows one would not like to
in a lonely wood.

closely that that was impossible, and as he reached the door, seized him by the collar with such force that the miserable wretch, pale and gasping for breath, fell on his knees and begged for mercy.

"Stenson!" said Christian, "what have you done with Stenson?"

"Who are you, sir, and what are you doing?" said the minister in a stern tone. "At such a solemn moment as this, in presence of a man whose soul has just gone before the supreme tribunal, do you dare to perpetrate an act of violence?"

While the minister was speaking Jacob tried to release Johan from Christian's grasp; but the young man's intense excitement increased his natural strength tenfold and the three men together could not have made him relax his hold.

In an instant Stangstadius appeared, drawn thither by the noise, and on his heels the heirs-at-law, eager to learn the truth concerning the baron's condition, and the servants, who were listening at the doors and had heard the dying man's last gasp.

"Who are you, sir?" repeated the minister, who Christian had voluntarily permitted to disarm him, without, however, releasing his prey.

"I am Christian Gœfle," he replied, as much from compassion for the poor heirs-at-law as from prudence inasmuch as he was in their power; "I have come here in behalf of Mr. Gœfle, my kinsman and friend, to demand the production of old Adam Stenson, whom the vile scoundrel may have had murdered before this!"

"Murdered?" cried the minister, recoiling in dismay.

"Oh! he is quite capable of it!" cried the heirs, who hated Johan.

And, paying no further heed to the incident, the

"Mr. Minister, I tell you this man is a schemer and a impostor, who attempts to pass himself off as the so heir to the barony, by means of an infernal fable Abandon me to his vengeance, you who hate me so, he added, addressing the heirs; "and now that the ma ter is no more, you will have nobody to thwart M Gœfle's infamous schemes; for it was he who invent this adventurer and who boasts that he will enforce h rights as against all of you."

If a thunderbolt had fallen in the midst of the asse blage, it would have produced no greater dismay a stupefaction than Johan's words; but, as he expecte they were followed by a sudden reaction, and a chorus insults and maledictions drowned Christian's voice wh the minister called upon him to justify or explain his co duct.

"Turn him out! let us drive him out-of-doors! a cur!" exclaimed the dead man's cousins and nephe savagely.

"No, no!" cried Johan, reinforced by his conf erates, who understood perfectly that the day of reve tions had come, and that the avengers must be reduce silence; "let us shut him up. To the tower! to tower!"

"Yes, yes, to the tower!" roared Baron Lindenw one of the greediest of the heirs.

"No, kill him!" cried Johan, risking all to win al

"Yes, yes, throw him out of the window!" replied chorus of diabolical passions.

Thereupon the chamber of death became the stag a scene of tumult and shameful disorder, the serv having rushed upon Christian, who could not de himself, for the minister had taken his stand in f of him to make a rampart of his body, swearing

room, spied the baron lying motionless on his bed. He approached, looking closely at him, and uncovered, saying:

"Death is the messenger of God!"

Then he replaced his hat on his head, and added:

"May God forgive Baron Waldemora!"

Several voices thereupon invoked the major's assistance against schemers and impostors; but he demanded silence and announced that he wished to hear from the minister and no other the first explanation of the strange scene that was taking place when he entered.

"Is it not more fitting," replied Mr. Akerstrom, "that this explanation should be given in another room?"

"Yes," said the major, "because of this dead body we will go into the baron's study. Corporal, see that everybody here passes through in single file, and let no one remain here or go out by any other door. Kindly go first, Mr. Akerstrom, with Doctor Stangstadius and the baron's physician."

Then, Christian having pointed out old Count Lo and his son, who had shown a disposition to defend him, the major invited them to pass into the study unguarded and showed them the greatest consideration when their turn to be questioned arrived.

The examination was very long and searching, but the major did not wait until it was finished before yielding to the impatient desire of Christian and Mr. Gœfle, and giving orders for the release of old Stenson, whom Jac declared that he had, with great regret, seen them take to the tower an hour before. Christian would have hastened thither at once; the major objected, and, without explaining his course, ordered that Stenson should be taken back immediately to the Stollborg and reinstal in his quarters there with all possible consideration,

at first, had become calmer when they found that neither the major nor Gœfle nor Christian spoke of any new competitor. There were about a dozen of them, all exceedingly ill-disposed to one another, although in their anxiety they had acted in concert in keeping watch upon their common prey. Old Count Nora alone, the poorest of them all, had preserved his dignity among them and had spoken his mind to the baron.

As no will made by the baron could impair Christian's rights, he had understood from a glance and a few words from the advocate that the search was intended solely to appease the rapacious band of heirs and to gain time until they should be in a position to act without concealment. Christian had also understood, from the significant silence of his friends with respect to himself, that the time had not come to make himself known, and that until further developments, the charge made by Johan with respect to his claims must be entirely disregarded.

As may be imagined, the heirs had joyfully accepted this view of the situation, which seemed to be confirmed by Gœfle's deprecatory pantomime, and by the air of satisfaction which Christian had naturally assumed the moment his mind was set at rest concerning Stenson's welfare. So that Christian seconded the plans of his friends by not accompanying them in their search for the will, and he was thinking solely of the best way of making inquiries for Margaret when he found himself face to face with Countess Elveda in the gallery.

She recognized him instantly and came to meet him.

"Aha!" she said gayly, "so you did not go away or else you have come back again, master phantom. But what sort of a costume is this? Are you free from the hunt, at midnight?"

"Exactly, countess," replied Christian, who saw fr

are on the other road, for there are two roads to success, adroitness and temerity. Yours is probably the shortest —that taken by wilful and audacious youths. You must go to Russia, my dear fellow. You are handsome and bold. I have spoken of you to the ambassador; he has noticed you, and he has designs on you. Do you understand me?"

"Not in the least, countess!"

"Oh! yes you do! Orloff's influence cannot last forever, and there are certain interests which may take the field against him. Now do you understand me? So do not think of my niece; you can aspire to a far greater match; and as, at this moment, you are nobody, not even Mr. Gœfle's nephew, I warn you that I would show you the door should you present yourself under my roof with the idiotic purpose of winning Margaret's fancy; whereas I shall look for you at Stockholm to introduce you to the ambassador, who will take you into his service. So farewell—or stay, I will take you with me."

"Really?"

"Yes, really. I shall leave my niece here; she was so terrified by the dying man's groans that she has gone to pass the night with her friend Miss Akerstrom at the parsonage; at least so her governess declares. Wherever the little coward may have taken refuge, Mademoiselle Potin will start for Dalby with her to-day, in charge of Peterson, a trustworthy man. Doctor Stangstadius has promised to go with them. It will be a heart-breaking blow to the little one, who flattered herself that she was going with me to Stockholm; but she is too young as yet; she would simply make a fool of herself in society. Her début is postponed until next year."

"In that case, she will pass another year all alone in her old manor-house?" said Christian.

"Ah! I see that she has been telling you her grievances. It is a very touching story, and that is why I mean to take you with me in my sleigh. Come, I give you an hour to make your preparations, then I will return here for you. Is it agreed?"

"I don't know what to say," replied Christian, putting a bold face on the matter; "I am very much in love with your niece, I warn you!"

"Very good; so much the better, if it lasts! When you have passed a few years in Russia and have procured a goodly supply of roubles and serfs, I shall not say no, if you persist."

And the countess withdrew, fully persuaded that Christian would not fail to keep the appointment.

She had no sooner disappeared than Mademoiselle Potin, who was watching her, glided to Christian's side and reproached him severely. She had been very anxious about Margaret and had looked for her everywhere.

"Luckily," said the governess, "she has just returned with her friend Martina, whose mother was not at all disturbed, thinking that she was staying late in our apartment; but it distresses me to have to lie so often to cover up Margaret's imprudence, and I shall certainly tell the countess everything unless you will give me your word of honor to leave the castle and the province instantly."

Christian comforted the good creature by telling her that he had agreed to take that course; and, firm in his resolution to do nothing that she wished him to do, he awaited developments.

At one o'clock in the morning the rest of the troops arrived very quietly, and word was sent to the major, who thereupon declared the search for the will at an end. It had been absolutely fruitless, to the great satisfaction of

the majority of the heirs, who preferred to stand on their rights under the law than to rely upon the very doubtful benevolence of the deceased.

"Now, gentlemen," said the major, "I beg you to accompany me to the Stollborg, where I have some reason to believe that we shall find a will, in the custody of Mr. Stenson."

As they all rushed to the door, he added:

"One moment, please; a very great responsibility rests upon Mr. Akerstrom, Mr. Gœfle and myself. I am bound to proceed with the most scrupulous care and formality, to assemble the largest possible number of substantial witnesses, and to see to it that everything is done in an orderly way and under strict surveillance. Kindly come with me to the hunting gallery, where the other witnesses should be assembled."

In conformity with the major's orders all the guests had been requested to repair to the gallery, to the great disgust of some, who were already on the point of taking their leave; but the *indelta* spoke in the name of the law and they submitted.

Countess Elveda, always active, and now in haste to be gone, was the first to arrive. She found Christian asleep on a sofa.

"Well, well!" she cried; "are you not more nearly ready than this?—And what are you doing here?" she added, addressing Margaret, who came in with her governess.

"I have no idea," was the reply; "I am simply obeying a general order."

Olga soon appeared, as did the minister's family, Stangstadius, the ambassador and his suite, in a word all the guests at Waldemora, in travelling costume, for the most part very angry at being detained just as they

were about to start, or at being aroused from their slumbers. They murmured audibly, they cursed the dismal bell, which might have waited, they said, until everybody had gone.

"But what is the matter? what do they want of us?" queried the dowagers; "did the baron give orders that we should come here and dance after his death, or are we doomed to look at him on his state bed? I have no desire for that; have you?"

"Who is that young man who is just leaving the room?" the ambassador asked Countess Elveda; "isn't it our young scapegrace?"

"Yes, that is our adventurer," she replied. "He just received a note. It seems that the order which keeps us here does not apply to him."

Christian had in fact received a note from Mr. Gœfle, who wrote to him:

"Go to the Stollborg at once and dress as you were dressed at the ball the night before last; then wait for us in the bear chamber. Have the staircase cleared of rubbish and conceal the breach in the wall behind the large maps."

Tea and coffee were served in the hunting gallery, and, a quarter of an hour later, all the persons designated by the major and the minister, together with the heirs, a portion of the servants and the principal vassals of the barony, repaired to the Stollborg, where Christian, suitably clad, did the honors with the aid of Nils, the *dannemans*, father and son, and Ulphilas, who had been released after a few hours' confinement. Let us say here that he never knew why Johan inflicted that punishment upon him, as he never had the slightest comprehension of what took place at the Stollborg, either while it was taking place or afterward.

XX

When the whole party was assembled, the major related in detail the whole story of the projected murder of Christian, and the prisoners, being summoned to appear, realizing that their cause was ruined by the imprisonment of Johan and the death of the baron, defended themselves so feebly that their denials were equivalent to confessions. Puffo frankly admitted that he had been employed to put the gold cup among his master's baggage, and that he had received money from Johan for doing it.

"Now," said the rapacious and arrogant Baron Lindenwald, who was the dead man's nearest relation, "we ask nothing better than to sign a statement of all that we have heard with relation to Master Johan, if we may be relieved from the necessity of passing judgment on the conduct and purposes of the baron his master. There is something barbarous and unholy about investigating an accusation against a man whose body is not yet in its grave, and who, as he lies on his bed of death, cannot answer the charges made against him. In my judgment, gentlemen, it is either too soon or too late, and we should refuse to listen to anything more. What do we care for this man who takes such precautions to ensure his vengeance before the courts upon varlets in whom nobody takes any interest, and upon the memory of a man whom everyone here, I presume, is at liberty to pass judgment upon privately, without being required to curse him in public. We have heard something about a

will, of which nothing more is said; and as it is easy to see that the purpose was to hoodwink us, I for one am resolved to retire and not to submit to this usurpation of authority by a petty officer of the *indelta*. I am not the only person here whose privileges are disregarded at this moment, and when such things happen, you know as well as I do, gentlemen, what remains for us to do."

As he concluded his harangue, Baron Lindenwald put his hand to his sword hilt, and as the other heirs followed his example, a conflict was imminent, when the minister, with great energy of speech and ministerial spirit, interposed and appealed for the support of all fair-minded and disinterested persons; and these, by their manner and their comments, expressed such unstinted condemnation of the baron's conduct, that the recalcitrant heirs submitted and relieved the major from the unpleasant duty of resorting to harsh measures against them.

It became very evident to him and to all the witnesses of the scene that the heirs refused to recognize the cause of the baron's hatred for Christian because they had a presentiment of the truth. Mr. Gœfle had caused Christian to take his place, as if by accident, directly under his father's portrait, and the resemblance impressed everybody; but there were too few sarcastic expressions in the Swedish tongue to afford a vent for the wrath of the *presumptuous* heirs against the travelling showman whom Johan had denounced, and whom Gœfle—whose natural son he was—was attempting to put forward on the strength of an improbable fairy story and manufactured evidence.

The advocate smiled and maintained a perfectly placid demeanor; Christian had a little more difficulty in restraining himself, but Margaret's tender and imploring glance performed that miracle.

"Now," said the minister, when silence was restored, "introduce Adam Stenson, whom we have kept secluded in his apartment since his release from confinement."

Stenson appeared. He was dressed with care; his mild and noble face, worn by fatigue, but dignified and serene, caused much emotion. Mr. Gœfle requested him to take a seat, and read to him the declaration written by his hand and entrusted to Manasseh, at Perugia. This document, which had not hitherto been produced, was received with a great stir of surprise and interest by some, and with the silence of stupefaction by others.

The Russian ambassador, who, perhaps, did not entertain the designs upon Christian which Countess Elveda attributed to him, or had endeavored to suggest to him, but was genuinely interested by his face and his resolute air, began to express his approval of the way in which the investigation was conducted, with the object of making a trial in court unnecessary, or, if there must be such a trial, of entering upon it with all the light to be derived from knowledge of the facts. It should be said, too, that Christian's friends had induced that important functionary to attend by gentle means. The distinguished consideration with which Mr. Gœfle, despite his prejudices against his political conduct, shrewdly treated him, flattered the ambassador, who delighted to meddle in private as well as public affairs in Sweden.

When the papers had been read through, the minister asked Stenson if he were in a condition to hear such questions as should be put to him.

"Yes, Mr. Akerstrom," replied Stenson. "My hearing is poor, it is true, but not always, and I often hear things to which I don't choose to reply."

"Are you willing to reply to-day?"

"Yes, I am."

"Do you recognize your handwriting in this document?"

"Perfectly."

"The reason for your long silence is indicated in it," continued the minister, "but the truth demands more details. The way in which the baron has treated you hitherto does not seem to account for your fear of him nor to justify you in ascribing to him such dreadful designs upon other persons."

Stenson replied by raising the sleeves of his coat and showing on his thin and trembling arms the marks of the cords which had been twisted about his wrists until the blood came.

"This," he said, "is the sport with which the baron was amusing himself when the death-agony extinguished the light of his eyes and put an end to my torture. But I admitted nothing; they might have broken all my old bones and I would not have spoken! What does death matter at my age?"

"You shall live, Stenson!" cried Mr. Gœfle; "you shall live to know a great joy. You can speak now, for Baron Olaus has ceased to live."

"I know it, otherwise I should not be here; but I shall have no more joy in this world, for he whose life I saved is no longer alive!"

"Are you quite sure of that, Stenson?" said Gœfle.

Stenson looked all about the room, which was brightly lighted. His eyes rested on Christian, who exerted all his self-restraint to avoid seeming to invite his notice, and even pretended not to see him, although he was consumed with longing to throw himself into his arms.

"Well," queried the advocate, "what is the matter, Stenson? Why are the tears streaming down your face?"

"Because I am afraid that I am dreaming," said Stenson; "because I thought I was dreaming when I saw him here two days ago, because I do not know him and yet I recognize him."

"Stay there, Mr. Stenson," said the minister, as the old man started toward Christian; "a resemblance may be simply a trick of chance. You must establish the truth of the facts stated by you in the paper which has been read."

"That is very easily done," said Stenson; "Mr. Gœfle has only to read you what I placed in his hands the day before yesterday; then he can establish the identity of Cristiano Goffredi and Christian Waldemora by means of Manasseh's letters, which I also handed to him yesterday."

"I swore," said Gœfle, "that I would not open that paper until after the baron's death. I opened it two hours ago, and these are the few words it contains:

"'Cut through the wall behind Baroness Hilda's portrait, at the right of the window in the bear chamber at the Stollborg.'"

"Oho!" whispered Larrson to the advocate, while the minister, under Stenson's direction, superintended the removal of the portrait and the opening of the hiding-place, "I supposed that the evidence would be found in the walled-up room."

"Thank God, no!" replied the advocate in the same tone, "for then we should have had to reveal the fact that we had broken in there, a fact which no one here suspects or observes, thanks to the replacing of the great maps; they might have accused us of putting false proofs there ourselves. It was because I had read this mysterious note of Sten's at the new castle, that I told you to bring a large number of witnesses here without fear of the result."

lowered the child to him from the window, by means of a rope and a basket. All this had taken much time and day was breaking. The window in the keeper's chamber was thrown open just as Stenson received the child in his trembling hands; but, as he was fortunately concealed by the arch formed by the rocks, he could safely remain there until the keepers had satisfied themselves that there was nothing wrong; then he commended himself to God and rowed quickly across the narrow space between the donjon and the mainland, behind the *gaard*.

Thus Christian, while exploring that curious spot, had divined and reconstructed his own story.

The child was entrusted to Anna Bœtsoï, mother of Karina and Joë the *danneman*. He was suckled by a tame doe in a chalet on the Blaakdal, and the imprisoned baroness received news of him from time to time by means of fires lighted on the horizon.

Her mind being at rest concerning her child's safety the baroness had entertained hopes of joining him and escaping with him to Denmark; but the baron had exacted as a condition of her liberty that she should sign a declaration that her pregnancy was feigned; and when she refused to do it, saying that she was willing to plead guilty to a mistake but not to any imposture, she saw that her enemy had grave suspicions of the occurrence which she had set her heart upon concealing. Then upon, in fear and trembling lest the child's birth and hiding place should be discovered and he be put to death, she signed that paper, drawn up by Mickelson, the minister.

"But," she said in her subsequent declaration, "I protest here before God and man against my own signature and I swear that it was extorted from me by violence and putting in fear. If under such circumstances I depart

was born black hair, and fingers "like his father's and grandfather's." Then, giving him her last blessing, she enjoined upon him to regard whatever Karina and Stenson should tell him thereafter as absolutely true, with respect to her suffering in her captivity and the constant and never-failing lucidity of her mind, despite the slanderous reports that had been circulated concerning her alleged mental alienation and frenzy.

"My mind is tranquil as death draws near," she wrote. "I go, full of resignation, hope and trust, to a better world. I forgive my persecutors. I have but one regret as I lay aside this wretched life, and that is that I must abandon my son; but the unhoped-for success of his escape has taught me to rely on Providence and on the sacred friendship of those who saved him."

The signature was firm and bold, as if a last burst of animation had warmed the poor dying woman's heart at that supreme hour. It was dated: *December 15, 1746.*

Under date of December 28th of the same year, Stenson had drawn up a sort of report of his unfortunate mistress's last moments and death.

"They deprived her of sleep down to the very last," he wrote; "Johan and his crew, quartered in the next room, yelling and swearing and blaspheming in her ears day and night, and the baron, her brother-in-law, coming every day on the pretext of seeing whether she was well treated, to tell her that she was mad and heap insulting reproaches upon her concerning the alleged trick which he had thwarted. The whole of the trick—and God assisted it—was to induce that pitiless persecutor, by dint of silence and patience, to believe tha my lady had really made a mistake concerning her con dition, and that he had nothing to fear in the future.

"On his side, Mickelson the minister, no less crue

and no less persistent than his master, came to the very foot of my lady's deathbed, to say to her that she had imbibed evil doctrines from having lived in papistical countries, and he threatened her again and again with the tortures of hell, instead of offering her the comfort and hope to which every Christian soul is entitled.

"He went away finally, an hour before she breathed her last, and she expired in our arms on the fourth day after Christmas, at four o'clock in the morning, saying:

"'O my God! let my son find a mother!'

"We bear witness that she died like a saint, without the slightest trace of anger, madness or doubt of the future.

"After closing her eyes, we stopped the clock and extinguished the Christmas candle which was burning in the chandelier, praying to God that we might be permitted to see those hands set in motion and that flame rekindled by our young master's hand.

"After which we drew up this paper, which we are about to sign and seal up, with that of our beloved mistress, in the wall of her room, in the place which she herself pointed out to us, everything being prepared therefor.

"And we have both signed our names, weeping bitter tears and solemnly affirming that we have set down only the exact truth.

"ADAM STENSON.
"KARINA BOETSI."

The minister read these simple pages with so much feeling and fervor that the women wept, and the men, touched and convinced, thrice acclaimed the name of Christian Waldemora, and crowded about him to congratulate him and grasp his hand; but the heirs—we

must always except old Count Nora and his son—declared that they demanded the production of Karina Bœtsoï, having probably picked up, heaven knows where, the information that that woman was alive and was mad. That offered them an opportunity to cast doubt upon her testimony; and the major was so reluctant to have her appear that he made haste to say that she was ill and lived a long way off. A harsh, albeit kindly voice interrupted him; it was the voice of Joë Bœtsoï the *danneman.*

"Why say what is not so, Major Larrson?" cried the honest fellow. "Karina Bœtsoï is neither so sick nor so far away as you think. She went to sleep here, and now that she is rested her mind's as clear as yours. Don't be afraid to send for Karina Bœtsoï. It is very true that the poor soul has suffered, especially since the day she had to part with the child; but, if she does say things you can't understand, she has a good head and a sure purpose all the same; for no one has ever been able to worm her secret from her, not even I, who knew the child, and have just learned his name and his story for the first time in my life. Now, a woman who can keep a secret like that isn't like other women, and when she speaks we must believe what she says."

He opened the door leading into the keeper's chamber.

"Come, sister," he said to the seer; "you are wanted here."

Karina entered the room amid a general murmur of curiosity. Her pallor and her premature old age, her wondering glance, her uncertain, jerky gait caused at first more pity than sympathetic interest. But, at the sight of all those people, she drew herself up and her uncertainty vanished. Her face assumed an enthusiastic and resolute expression. She had taken off the shabby

"I order you, and I entreat you," said the minister; "tell it calmly, and remember that God hears and weighs your every word."

Karina collected herself and said:

"We are in the room where my beloved mistress fell asleep forever."

"Is it Hilda Waldemora whom you so describe?"

"It is she, the widow of the young *jarl*, and the mother of the child called Christian, who will soon return to relight the Christmas candle by the fireside of his ancestors. She gave birth to the child in the middle of the month of *Hæst*,* here, in this bed, where she died at the end of the month of *Jul*.† She gave him her blessing here by this window, through which he flew away, for he was born with wings! And then she lied, saying in her heart: 'May God forgive me for killing my son in word but it is better that he should live among elves than among men.' Then she sang to the harp, and when she died, she said: '*May God give my son a mother!*'"

With that Karina, becoming momentarily conscious of her surroundings, began to weep; then her ideas became involved once more, and the minister, seeing that she no longer seemed to understand the questions put to her, motioned to the *danneman*, who gently led the poor woman away, with a triumphant glance at the assemblage because of the way in which his sister had replied.

"What more do you desire?" said Gœfle to the witnesses; "did not this inspired woman say to you, in her few homely poetic sentences, the selfsame thing that Stenson had written down? And is not this sort of delirium in which she lives a proof of what she has suffered for those she loved so dearly?"

The opportunity to exert his professional skill was t

* September. † December.

tempting for the advocate not to seize it by the hair. He spoke like one inspired, briefly reviewed the facts, told a part of Christian's life, after establishing his identity by means of Manasseh's letters to Stenson, detailed the romantic incidents of the two days that had just passed, and succeeded so well in carrying conviction to the minds of his hearers that they forgot the late hour and their weariness and plied him with questions for the pleasure of listening to him longer; after which each person affixed his or her signature to the report of the meeting.

Baron Lindenwald made one last attempt to revive the flagging courage of the other heirs.

"No matter," he said, rising, for the doors were open and every one was at liberty to go, "we will find a way to upset all these absurd fables; we will appeal to the courts!"

"I rely upon it!" retorted Gœfle warmly, "and I await your arguments without fear."

"For my part, I shall not resort to the courts," said Count Nora; "I am satisfied and I shall sign."

"Nor will these other gentlemen proceed any farther," observed the ambassador significantly.

"Yes, they will," said the advocate; "but they will lose."

"We will attack the validity of the marriage," cried the baron; "Hilda Blixen was a Catholic!"

Christian, irritated beyond words, was about to make an angry retort, but Gœfle hastily interposed to prevent him.

"What do you know about it, my dear sir?" he asked the baron. "Where do you find any proof of it? Where is this alleged chapel to the Virgin which she is supposed to have built? Now that the Stollborg has no further mysteries for anyone, will that ridiculous tale still be

persisted in—a tale which served many people as a pretext for abandoning that unfortunate woman to persecution and death?"

"But may not Mr. Christian Goffredi, who was brought up in Italy, be a Catholic himself?" muttered the heirs as they withdrew. "Patience! we will find out; and then we will see if a man who is ineligible to sit in the Diet or hold any public office can inherit an estate which carries with it all the privileges of nobility!"

"Hush, Christian, hush!" said Gœfle in an undertone, forcibly detaining Christian as he attempted to follow his adversaries out-of-doors and defy them to their faces. "Stay here, or all is lost! Be a Catholic, if you think best, when you have succeeded to the estate and title; but don't start that hare now. No one has noticed that the shape of the room we are in has been changed."

"What do you mean?" asked the major. "We can safely throw the walled chamber open to the whole world, as the alleged chapel doesn't exist!"

"True, we might do it if we had not opened it," rejoined the advocate, "for then they could not have accused us of putting the evidence of prohibited religious practices out of the way."

At that moment Countess Elveda accosted Christian with her most gracious air:

"I trust now, my lord, that I shall have the pleasure of seeing you at Stockholm?"

"Will it still be on the condition that I am to go soon to Russia?"

"No, I leave your heart at liberty to choose the object of its desires."

"Does Countess Margaret accompany you to Stockholm?" asked Christian in a low voice.

"She will probably come there when you have won your lawsuit, if there is to be a lawsuit. Meanwhile she will return to Dalby. That is decided, prudence demands it, and I offer you a seat in my sleigh to Stockholm, where your affairs will be adjusted."

"I thank you, countess; I am entirely at the orders of my advocate, who still needs my presence here."

"Farewell then, until we meet again," she replied, taking the arm of the ambassador, who said to her as they left the room:

"I am quite as well pleased that that comely young baron does not travel with you."

Margaret said farewell to her aunt at the gate of the Stollborg, and went with her governess and the Akerstrom family to the minister's *bostælle*, where she proposed to rest a while before returning home. She did not exchange a word or even a glance with Christian; but it was tacitly agreed between them that she should not leave the province until they had met once more.

The major returned with his troops and his prisoners to the new castle, where he was to await the arrival of superior orders as to whether he should continue or suspend the exercise of his authority. The *danneman* and his family returned to their mountains, Karina having failed to realize that Christian was the child of the lake. Her mind was incapable of admitting the notion of the present so suddenly; and afterward, although her mental condition was improved, and she had an instinctive feeling that she was delivered from a great trouble, she did not recognize him in all the many times that she saw him, and she frequently confounded him with his father, young Baron Adelstan.

It was four o'clock in the morning, and despite their custom of retiring late when the nights are very long,

such a succession of exciting events had so thoroughly exhausted the principal characters of our story, that they all went to bed and slept soundly, except perhaps Johan and his crew, imprisoned in the tower of the new castle, where they had confined and tortured so many poor creatures.

But before daybreak Stenson stole to Christian's bedside, and after gazing at him for some moments in a sort of ecstasy, roused him without rousing the advocate.

"Rise, my master," he said in his ear; "I have something to say to you, to you alone! I will wait for you in the walled-up chamber."

Christian rose noiselessly and dressed in haste; then, closing the doors behind him, followed Stenson into the deserted, dilapidated room into which he had forced his way the night before. There Stenson, baring his head, said to him:

"Here, my lord, behind this wainscot on which you see a door carved, is a mystery which can be revealed to you alone. It was here that her ladyship your mother secretly caused an altar to be erected to the Virgin; for she was a Catholic, that is only too certain. As the exercise of her religion was prohibited in her husband's country, she was compelled to worship in secret, lest she should bring persecution upon him.

"Mickelson the minister was never able to prove anything, as the altar was brought here and placed in its niche by some travelling Italian workmen, who had executed other works in wood and in marble at the new castle. I alone was in her confidence. There was at the castle a learned old Frenchman, who was a Catholic without anybody's suspecting it, and who used to say mass here secretly; but he was dead and the Italian workmen had gone away at the time of your poor moth-

at night; but whatever Mickelson may have said, it was the body of a blessed saint. Whatever her religion, the baroness loved God, did good and respected the religion of other people. She is in heaven, praying for us, and her soul rejoices to see her son where he is and as he is now."

"Ah!" said Christian, "happiness is not of this world, for I would have made her happy, and she is dead!"

Christian kissed the tomb respectfully and with fervent faith, and, having drawn the curtain and closed the panel in the wainscot, returned with Stenson to the bear chamber. There the old man said to him:

"I do not know whether it will require much time and trouble for you to enforce your rights; but authorize me to rebuild this partition. As soon as you are master here we will carry the tomb to the chapel in the new castle."

"My mother's tomb beside Baron Olaüs's? No, never! Since Sweden denies her a bit of earth to cover her bones, after denying her air and liberty, I will carry her precious remains to a more generous clime. Rich or poor, I shall be able to procure the means to return with them to the shore of that lake in Italy where my other mother rests, she whose last prayer was heard and who, although she too was very unhappy, had at all events a son to close her eyes."

"Act deliberately and with prudence," said Stenson, "or else your rights will be disregarded. Some day you will be able to do as you wish; but for the present do not let anybody know, not even your best friends, not even the excellent Mr. Gœfle, that your mother was a Catholic. He will argue more convincingly that she was not; and if you yourself are of that faith, conceal it, or you cannot triumph over your enemies!"

They both went first to the parsonage, where Christian, after expressing his gratitude in respectful and affectionate terms to Mr. Akerstrom, appointed him curator of his property, so far as he had authority on to do, justly anticipating that his choice would be confirmed by the tribunal of the nobility. He was unable to obtain a moment's conversation with Margaret alone, and even if he had been able to speak freely with her, he would not have presumed to ask her to pledge herself to him until he was certain of not becoming plain Christian Wulfe once more; but Margaret had no doubt of his intentions or of his success, and she returned to her seclusion with all the hopes of youth and the faith of a first love.

Christian declined to go to breakfast at the new castle with the major and his friends. In the evening they were all invited to take supper with the minister. Margaret was not to start until the next day. On that day Christian likewise started with the advocate, amusing himself by driving Loki, which enabled Master Nils to sleep all the way, rousing himself only to eat.

After two weeks at Stockholm, where Christian's demeanor was marked by much prudence, reserve and dignity, Mr. Gœfle, who was very impatient to return to Gevala, invited him to accompany him thither, pending the decision of the supreme tribunal, which was likely to be delayed, as the death of the king and the accession of Prince Henry—as Gustavus III.—had given the high functionaries much serious occupation. But Christian, anticipating an unlimited period of uncertainty and suspense, was unwilling to live all the time at the advocate's expense; so he determined to carry out his plan of travelling with the *dannemen* Bretsil to the ice-bound districts of Norway. In order to avoid living at that honest peasant's cost, he accepted from

would seek a quarrel with him. He knew that Christian was easily excited, and said to himself that, even if he should kill one or two adversaries, he might well be killed by the third. Too many people were interested in wearing out his patience and in enticing him to the duelling field. He was careful not to give him that chance, but urged him not to expect success at once.

With this letter Christian received a further sum of money, which he determined not to add to the amount of the original debt. His prospects were so uncertain that he hired himself out for the fishing season at the Loffoden Islands, and he wrote to Mr. Gœfle early in April:

"Here I am in a little village in Nordland, where it seems that I have entered into the land of Canaan, although *Danneman* Bœtsoi's *torp* is a very Louvre compared with my present quarters, and his *kakebroe* a dainty morsel beside the bread of *pure wood* which is my delight to-day. This means that I have had many privations, to say nothing of fatigue and dangers; but I have seen the most awe-inspiring spectacle in the whole world, the grandest and most rugged scenery in nature; submarine eddies into which ships and monsters of the sea are sucked as the leaves are whirled about by the wind in autumn; rivers which never freeze amid ice which never melts; waterfalls whose roaring can be heard for several leagues; abysses into which the reindeer and the elk cannot look without vertigo; snow-fields harder than Parian marble; men uglier than monkeys; angelic souls in loathsome bodies; a people hospitable amid shocking destitution, patient, gentle and pious, fighting incessantly against the most violent and cruel natural conditions that can be imagined. I have been disappointed in nothing. Everything that I have seen is more sublime or more astounding than anything I had imagined.

Mr. Gœfle received several other letters of the same tenor during the summer and winter following. The suit did not progress, indeed, there was no suit properly so-called, the *presumptuous* heirs carrying on an underground combat much more dangerous, and placing intangible obstacles in the way of the committee's decision.

But Christian was beginning to have his fill of adventures, fatigues and hard labor. He did not confess it to his friend, but the exuberance of his curiosity had subsided. The cravings of his heart, aroused by hopes that were deceptive, perhaps, often cried out for the happiness of which he had caught a glimpse. His *terrible life*, as he called it, was not too much for his heroic resolutions and for the cheerful vigor of his temperament; but his heart very often suffered in silence, and the moment had come when, as Major Larrson expressed it, the bird, fatigued by flying through space, was anxious to find a soft sky and a safe place to build its nest.

Want visited Christian more than once, despite his intelligence and his activity. The traveller's life is a succession of windfalls and losses, of unhoped-for triumphs and desperate disasters. He earned enough to keep him alive from day to day by selling the spoils of his gun and his line, and by bartering merchandise which he carried long distances with unfaltering courage and determination; but the young baron, naturally compliant, trustful and generous, was not born to be a tradesman, and his *incognito* could not conceal the aristocratic liberality of his character.

Moreover, the chapter of accidents often defeated his most prudent previsions, and one day he was reduced to the necessity of fulfilling the dream of heroic desperation of which he had talked to the major on Blaakdal Mountain; that is to say, he was compelled, like Gustavus

Vasa, to work in the mines, and, like that hero of epic romance, he came to be recognized as *a workman of no ordinary sort*, not so much *by reason of the embroidered neck-band of his shirt*, as by the authority of his speech and the fire of his glance.

So Christian obtained employment in the mines of Roraas, among the highest mountains of Norway, about ten leagues from the Swedish frontier. He had been at work for a week, with a skill and energy which had earned for him the esteem of his fellow-workmen, when he received a letter from Mr. Gœfle thus conceived:

"All is lost. I have seen the king; he is a delightful man, but alas! I told him who you were, I laid all our proofs before him, I told him your views concerning the abuse of the privileges by the nobility, and how useful you would be in carrying out the plans of a philosophical and fearless prince who desired to restore equality of rights among all ranks of people. After listening to me with a degree of attention and grasping my meaning with a lucidity which I never met with in any judge, he said:

"'Alas! my dear sir, to do justice to the oppressed is a vast undertaking; it is beyond my strength. I should be crushed by it, like my poor father, whom *they* killed with weariness and disappointment!'

"Gustavus is kind-hearted and weak; he does not want to die! We flattered ourselves to no purpose that he would strike powerful blows for us in the Senate. Sweden is lost, and so is our suit!

"Come back to me, Christian. I love you and esteem you. I have a little property and no children at all. Say the word and I will divide my practice with you. You speak Swedish beautifully, you are naturally eloquent. You can learn our code and succeed me. I expect you."

"No!" cried Christian, putting his noble-hearted friend's letter to his lips; "I know more than he thinks of the slender resources of that country, and the sacrifices which such a partnership would impose upon that excellent man! And then, too, it takes years to learn a code, and during all that time I, young and strong as I am, should have to live on the generosity of a man who, after so many years of conflicts and weariness, deserves to live henceforth in comfort and repose! No, no! I have my arms, and I can live by them until destiny points out to me a fitting employment for my intellect."

And he returned to the gallery where, from dawn to dark, he must work with pick and hammer, by the light of a small lamp and amid the sulphurous atmosphere of the mine, at the cupriferous vein which extended in all directions into the bowels of the earth.

But after a few days Christian's situation changed for the better. The foremen had noticed him, and they placed him in charge of certain work for which his capacity and fitness had manifested themselves without the slightest ostentation on his part. Being well-informed, modest and hard-working, he employed his hours of leisure in teaching the workmen. One evening he opened a free course of lectures in elementary mineralogy, and was attentively listened to by those rough men, who saw in him a hard-working comrade and at the same time an original and cultivated mind. His lecture room was one of those great metal-walled caverns to which miners love to give high-sounding names. His desk was a block of rough copper.

Christian tried to be happy by dint of hard work and self-sacrifice, for happiness is what man always seeks, even behind his sacrifice of self. He nursed the sick and injured miners. Not only was he always the first to ar-

rive, with heroic courage, at the scene of an accident, but he taught the workmen to guard against the terrible perils of their employment by common sense and forethought. He tried to soften their manners and to fight against their ruinous passion for brandy, the too fruitful mother of shocking duels with knives. He was loved and esteemed; but his wages were all expended in relieving the crippled and the widows and orphans.

"Unquestionably," he often said to himself as he entered the bucket which lowered him into the depths of a bottomless pit, "I was born a great nobleman, that is to say, according to my understanding of the words, a protector of the weak; and for that reason I shall never be able to live in the sunlight!"

"Christian," the inspector shouted to him one day through the speaking trumpet from the mouth of the yawning shaft, "drop your hammer a moment and go to the foot of the shaft to receive a party who want to see the large galleries. Do the honors, my boy; I haven't the time to come down."

As usual, Christian caused the long pine torches to be lighted within the excavations and went to meet the visitors; but, when he recognized Akerstrom the minister and his family, and Lieutenant Osburn with his young wife Martina on his arm, Christian handed his torch to an old miner who was devoted to him, saying that he had a touch of the cramp, and that he would do him a service by acting as a guide to the visitors in his place. Then, pulling his tarred cap over his eyes, he stood aloof, feasting his heart with the pleasure of seeing that his friends were happy, but unwilling to be recognized by them, fearing that the discovery might distress them and might lead to Margaret's being informed of his present situation.

He was about to walk away after listening for a moment to their merry and animated conversation, when Mistress Osburn turned back, saying:

"Why doesn't Margaret come? The coward must have been afraid to cross the little bridge!"

"Where you were terribly frightened yourself, my dear Martina!" observed the lieutenant; "but what are you afraid of? Isn't Doctor Stangstadius with her?"

Christian, forgetting the cramp he had resolved to have, darted up the steep slope leading to the plank bridge, a veritably nerve-trying spot, which Margaret must cross under the escort of Stangstadius, who, although he was of all men in the world the most skilful in the matter of falling, was by no means the most capable of protecting others.

Margaret was in fact there, dizzy and hesitating, with Mademoiselle Potin, who crossed more bravely in Doctor Stangstadius's footsteps, in order to encourage her young charge. The lieutenant returned to assist her and to tranquillize his wife; but before he arrived Christian had darted forward, taken Margaret in his arms, and crossed the underground torrent, all without a word.

Margaret certainly did not see him, for she closed her eyes in order to shut out the sight of the abyss; but when he set her down beside her friends, intending to make his escape as speedily as possible, Margaret, still terrified, staggered, and he had to grasp her hand and pull her away from the precipice. His fingers, blackened by his work, left a mark on the girl's pale-green glove, and he saw that she carefully wiped it off the next moment, saying to her governess:

"Pray give some money to this poor fellow who carried me!"

one's service. Do you know, our friends never thought that it might be you: there are so many Christians under the Scandinavian sky! But I said to myself: 'There is only one, and this is he!' Come, give me your hand; are we not brother and sister still, as we were at Waldemora?"

How could Christian fail to forget the little insult of the soiled glove? Margaret offered him her bare hand.

"Doesn't it make you blush to see me here?" he said; "then you must know that it was not misconduct that brought me here, and that I am not working to-day to atone for days of indolence and folly?"

"I know nothing about you," Margaret replied, "ex cept that you have kept the promise you gave Majo Larrson *long ago*, to be a miner or bear-hunter, rathe than continue in a profession which was repugnant t me."

"Nor do I know anything of you, Margaret, excep that your aunt wishes you to marry Baron Lindenwal who has won his suit against me, it seems."

"That is true," said Margaret with a laugh. "M aunt seeks to console me in that way for the death Baron Olaüs; but, as you have such a gift for divini things, you should know also that I do not expect marry at all."

Christian understood this resolution, which left hope undiminished. He swore inwardly that he wou make his fortune, though he had to become selfish to it. In spite of all that he could say, Margaret refused protect his incognito when the lieutenant and the min ter's family arrived in the midst of their tête-à-tête.

"It is he!" she cried, running to meet them; "i our friend of the Stollborg, you know whom I mean is Christian, the friend of the poor, the hero of the mi

instant from the dark depths of the pit to its mouth, through which he could see a bit of blue sky framed by service-trees and lilacs, when he found himself in the presence of a miner whom he had noticed on making his round of inspection the night before, but who did not belong to the squad to which he himself had belonged, and of which he was now at the head.

This man was a stranger to Christian's companions. His face was excessively soiled and grimy, whether from carelessness or by design, and he wore a ragged hat which hung down on all sides of his head, so that it was exceedingly difficult to form an idea of his features; nor had Christian tried to see them. He might be one of those who are called shame-faced workmen, just as we say *shame-faced poor*, to express precisely the opposite of shame, which is silent pride. So he respected the air of mystery assumed by the stranger, and after giving the customary whistle to warn those who were handling the hoisting tackle, he simply pointed to a place beside him in the bucket, supposing that he, too, proposed to ascend. But the stranger seemed to hesitate. He put his hands on the edge of the bucket, as if he intended to jump in, then stopped and seemed to be looking for something.

"Have you lost any of your tools?" said Christian, noticing that he was heavy and awkward and had none of the agility of the miner who is accustomed to use the bucket.

No sooner had he spoken than the stranger, as if he had been waiting to hear his voice before making up his mind, stepped in beside him with more determination than address, and waited in silence for the answering whistle.

Christian supposed that the fellow did not understand Norwegian, and, as he knew almost all the dialects of

rapidity. When Christian reached the mouth of the shaft and stepped out upon the platform which overhung it, a hollow roar ascended from the bowels of the earth, while Stangstadius's extraordinary face appeared at his side, wreathed in smiles.

"Come, make haste, my dear baron," he said; "they refuse to sup without you over yonder, and I am dying of hunger!"

"But what has happened here, I pray you?" said Christian, paying no heed to him but addressing the men who were working the hoisting apparatus. "Where is the other bucket? Where is the man who——"

"The rope broke," said one of them, with a mighty oath, pretending to deplore the accident, while the other, putting his lips to Christian's ear, said:

"Hush! we let him drop!"

"What! you let that miserable wretch—that madman——"

"That miserable wretch was not mad," interposed the workman. "He has been looking for an opportunity to be alone with you for three days. We were watching him; we saw what he proposed to do. So we sent down another bucket to you, and as for the one he was in, why, there's a bucket smashed—that's all!"

Christian knew that justice was administered summarily and expeditiously in the mines in those days. He was all the more disturbed and distressed by what had happened, because he knew that men who begin work in that underground world beyond middle age are sometimes subject to sudden attacks of madness. He bade them lower him with Stangstadius, who justly claimed to know all about such accidents, *ex professo*. Two miners, also, went down, to testify to the facts, they said, but in reality to put the corpse out of sight and

Christian did not mention this letter to the friends who were awaiting him at the house of the minister of Roraas, where the minister of Waldemora, with his friends, was cordially welcomed and entertained. Christian was able to talk for a few moments with Margaret and her governess, apart from the others. He was bolder than he had ever been before. He ventured to speak of love. Mademoiselle Potin tried to interrupt him, but Margaret interrupted her.

"Christian," she said, "I do not know very well what love is, and what difference you seek to point out to me between that sentiment and my present feeling for you. What I do know is that I respect and esteem you, and that, if I am ever free and you are still free at that time, I will share your fortune, whatever it may be. I have worked a great deal since we parted; I could give lessons now or keep books, like so many poor girls who work and who have the good sense and spirit not to blush for it, like Mademoiselle Potin de Gerville herself, who belongs to a noble family, and who has not sacrificed her dignity in anybody's eyes, but has added to it in the eyes of noble-hearted persons, by not shrinking from turning her talents to advantage; the proof of what I say," she added, glancing at her governess with a mischievous twinkle in her eyes, "is that she is secretly engaged to Major Larrson, and that she is only waiting for my marriage before celebrating her own."

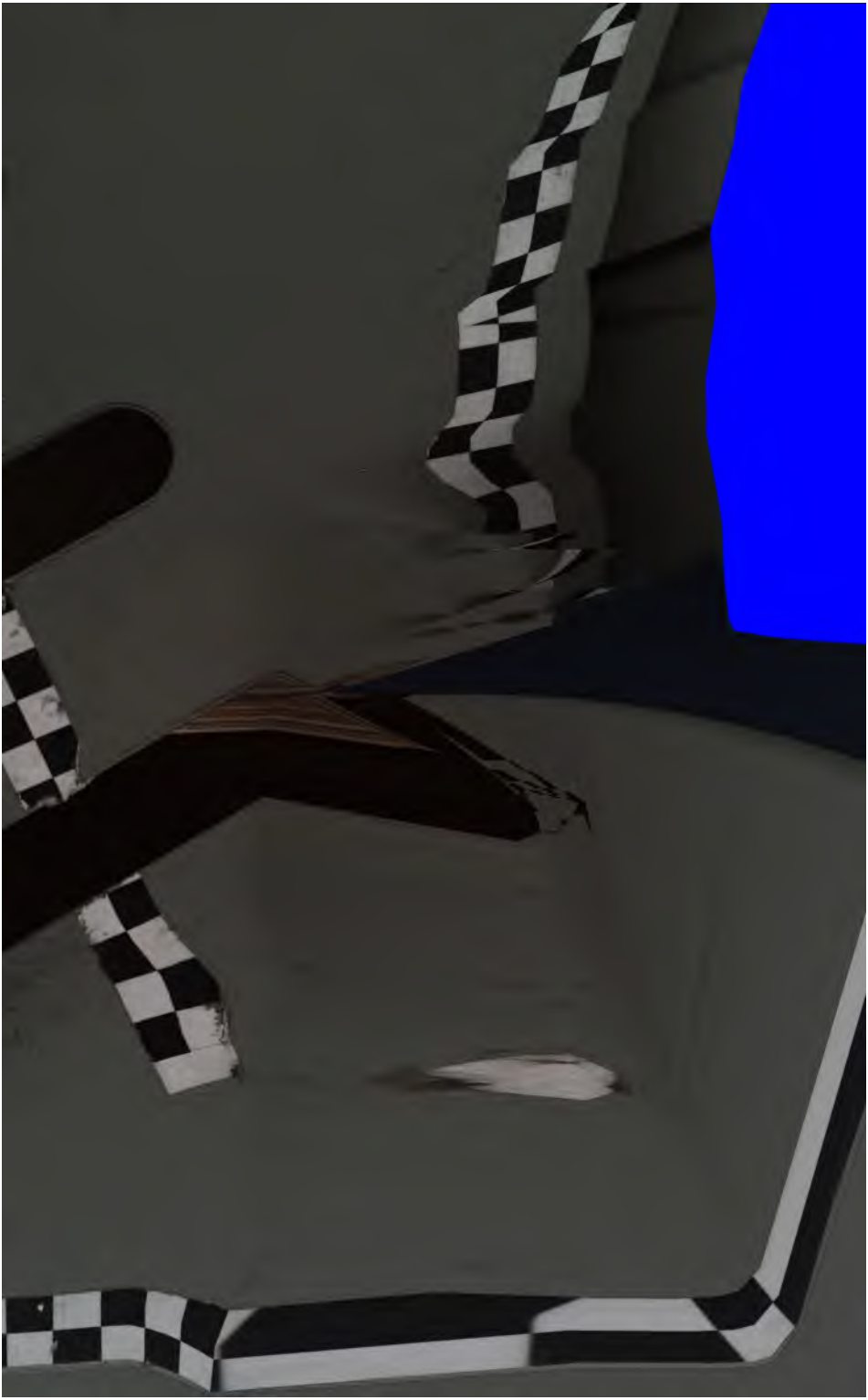
Mademoiselle Potin was sorely embarrassed to contradict Margaret. She was vexed with Christian for insisting on being loved at the very moment that his cause was known to be lost; she was altogether angry with him when he joined the little caravan to cross the mountains and return to Sweden by way of Idre and the Blaakdal.

riole, rejuvenated and triumphant; thanks to the warmth of the season, and perhaps also to the return of happiness and confidence, he was hardly deaf at all. He brought the decree of the committee of the Diet confirming Christian's title, and a letter from Countess Elveda wherein she secretly authorized Mr. Gœfle to bestow her niece's hand on the new Baron Waldemora.

As he returned to the castle with his *Uncle* Gœfle, Christian, whose heart overflowed to see the merry party of his kind friends following the windings of the picturesque road down the mountain side, was suddenly seized with melancholy.

"I am too happy," he said to the advocate; "I would like to die to-day. It seems to me that the life upon which I am about to enter will be a constant succession of assaults upon the pure and simple happiness of which I used to dream."

"That is quite possible, my boy," was the reply. "Only novels end with the inevitable formula: 'And they lived happily forever after.' You will suffer at the contact with public life, which is terribly agitated in these days, especially in the high social spheres in which you will figure. I don't know what extraordinary events are brewing. I felt as if something were revealed to me in the last interview granted me by the king. On that day he appeared to me at once grand and formidable. I believe that he is meditating an explosion which will send many people back to their proper places; but can he and will he keep them there? Can revolutions which anticipate the work of time and ideas form the basis of anything lasting?"

"Not always," said Christian; "but they plant milestones in history, and some traces always remain of the progress which is arrested."

a peaceful alliance with France, and of resistance to Russian ambition by the union of all Scandinavia. Then, in the evening, we will disinter the *burattini*, and give performances for all the young blood assembled at the castle, in which I propose to become the rival of the famous Christian Waldo, of pleasant and joyous memory."